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MUSK

HASHISH AND BLOOD

BY

HECTOR FRANCE

WITH TWENTY-TWO ETCHINGS

LONDON AND PARIS

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MDCCCC

This One
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INSCRIBED TO

EDMOND LEPELLETIER,

Who in the *Réveil* first gave a hearty welcome to these recollections of my life as a soldier in Africa, and by whose advice I first undertook the task of putting them in shape. The credit for them, if credit there is any, belongs therefore to him, who has also worn as a volunteer the honourable garb of a soldier, that fools and cowards try, and always have tried, to turn into ridicule. For this cause I put his name on the book; and would crave leave once more to repeat to him, as to all, the words of Blaise de Montluc : « Now I pray you, knights and captains, which shall do me the honour for to read my book, bring not any ill intent to the perusal thereof; believe me that I have told the truth, without filching

away the honour of other men. And I know right well some there will be that shall put my writing to the essay to see if I have put forth any lie; them I do assure that I have left unsaid manifold details the which I should have given, for that I have never writ aught before, nor studied the making of books..... I beg of you, good knights, if my book do fall into your hands, to make discreet judgement whether what I say be true or false, for that you yourselves have seen some part of the deeds therein writ... Many are alive which have been my companions in arms, and many moreover which have marched under me, all of whom may be faithful witnesses of those things I have said..... ».

H. F

FOREWORD

FOREWORD

The Tales here brought together in one Volume are in no sense a work of fancy pure and simple; imagination has played quite a secondary part in their evolution. They are rather what in French we call « pages vécues »; and indeed for ten long years the Author actually « lived » them, when wrapped in the scarlet « burnouse » of a Spahi, he shared in many a wild foray and desert bivouac on the Algerian frontiers.

Away yonder, altogether outside « our » civilization, he spent the best years of his youth, far from towns, and railways, and steam engines, and factory chimneys, all those marvels of modern Invention for which he must own he feels but a very qualified admiration. He firmly believes with Théophile Gautier, that there is not one of them that has added one straw to the happiness of the human race.

The Arab lives content beneath his tent of skins, satisfied with his hunch of date-cake and the mess of couscous *his wives make ready for him, with the milk of his goats and fresh water from the well; and rejects with well-grounded contempt the interested offers of the* Mercantis (*European traders*), *who would fain inoculate him with the artificial requirements and expensive vices of the Foreigner.*

What is the luxury of our Palaces to him, when a blanket and a straw mat are all he needs for a couch and his horse's saddle serves him as a pillow, as he falls asleep and dreams of the unknown worlds that glitter above his head in the infinite depths of the heavens?

After years of this ampler life, spent face to face with the vast infinitude of the open desert, a man feels ill at ease amid the stifling, cramped conditions of our European cities. Thoughts of « the days that are no more » arise, bringing to mind the Poet's words :

Que vous ai-je donc fait, ô mes jeunes années !
Pour m'avoir fui si vite et vous être éloignées
Me croyant satisfait ?

Hélas ! pour revenir m'apparaître si belles,
Quand vous ne pouvez plus me prendre sur vos ailes,
Qu'ai-je donc fait[1] *?*

(VICTOR HUGO, *Les feuilles d'automne.*)

For it was not, as might seem, beneath the dark-blue sky of sunny Algeria, but amid the dismal, smoky London fogs, that these pages were written, — in days when the Author had hung up beside his work-table the cavalry sabre he is never, alas! to wield again.

A soldier's duties, — I am speaking of a soldier on service, — occupy his time much too fully to allow him at the end of the hot, tiring day's work to find the leisure and quiet needful for one who would woo the Muses' favour. A man's one desire then is to stretch his aching limbs beside the camp-fire, to snatch a brief repose before the reveillée *sounds at daybreak to rouse him to another*

1. (*O years of youth! what have I done,*
That you should fly so swift, and glide
So far? Ye thought me satisfied,
And life and love but scarce begun!

Nay! my full course is not half run;
O cruel years! Can nothing bring,
Bring back lost days your hasting wing
Has borne away? What have I done?)

day of hard riding and adventure. It is scarce possible adequately to fill two rôles at one and the same time. Mars is much taken up with Venus; he is within his rights to neglect Apollo. An ill-assorted pair, — the helmed god of War and he of the golden bays; and I can understand now a thing that made me wonder once, how the soldier whom the tarantula *of literature torments is looked at askance by his superiors. A good officer should not be busy trimming his pen, but seeing to the welfare of his men. Time enough to turn his thoughts to the Muses, when the bugle has sounded the retreat for good and all, and his fighting days are finished.*

So these pictures are no mere impressionist *sketches drawn on the spot. They were written down after the event, in cold blood.* Then *the mind is more impartial than it can ever be when subject to the direct, but at the same time fleeting, influence of the moment.*

So I have described things, not as they ought to be, but as they are, *as I* saw *them, — and this after due reflexion has ripened and matured my judgement.*

A few of the following pages I admit, may possibly shock some prudish souls always ready to be

shocked; and I hereby declare at once that my book is not written for perusal in young ladies' seminaries. But is Literature, I ask, to be confined within the narrow limits of what young ladies may with propriety hear and see? I am aware there is a school of mock-modest pedants that would have it so; but *the future of a Nation's Literature must outweigh their scruples!*

To others, less narrow-minded than these last, but whom certain pictures I have drawn might perhaps offend, I say : Remember this, — the great world, mankind at large, cannot be judged by the standard of the familiar folk of everyday whose whole life is passed within view of the steeple of their Parish Church. It is ridiculous to suppose you *are the sole possessors of true Religion, or of the only true Morality; both Religion and Morality alter with the degrees of latitude. Each People has its own customs, its own point of view; the very thing we most admire at home seems a grotesque absurdity to our neighbour living abroad under another sky*

HECTOR FRANCE.

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MUSK

HASHISH AND BLOOD

MUSK

HASHISH AND BLOOD

« Would God we soldiers that do bear arms had more taken upon us this custom of writing down things the which we see and do. Methinks the task were better acquitted by our own proper hand, — I mean in matter of war, — than by men of letters : for that these disguise the things overmuch, and the whole doth overmuch smack of the learned clerk. »

BLAISE DE MONTLUC

I

"MURDER!"

I

" MURDER ! "

It was white and smooth, giving somewhat to the touch, soft and sweet to look at and of fine satiny texture, a young, healthy woman's belly.

Still I could not take oath to any of these qualities; for to tell the truth, I paid very little attention to them. What I do remember exactly is the knife, for I kept it for years after, hung at my saddle-bow. A sound, strong blade, a good half-inch broad and ten inches long, tapering to a point with something of a curve towards the extremity. The haft was of heart of oak, carved with quaint arabesques, — the handiwork of some camel-driver of Flissa, an artistic genius without knowing it.

I perfectly remember how I hesitated a minute, then shut my eyes tight, and then... something spurted up in my face and stung like a jet of scalding water.

I can even now see the gaping hole and the dripping blade. At the moment I seemed to feel an Arctic wind laden with frosty ice-needles lashing my head.

It was my hair that started up on end in a spasm of horror! First attempt of a prentice hand; so perhaps some little emotion was excusable. I was barely twenty at the time.

*
* *

But the thing that horrified me above all was this. Gleaming through the faint, broken light that brooded over the woman's form, I caught sight of an eye fixed on me with a ghastly, stony glare!

I must put an end to this at any cost; and I struck a second blow. In vain! the glassy eye was still upon me with the unpitying tenacity of some demon of Remorse gazing sternly in from the land of shadows through the casement of the other world.

" Curse you! you shall *not* stare at me! " I cried; and for the third time I plunged my knife in.

In my youth and inexperience I was unaware of the fact that the victims of murder always depart this life with open eyes, as if loath to lose from their ken the sights of everyday. Only a touch of the finger was needed to close the eye for ever; but I did not know this, and went on savagely dealing blow on blow.

I hacked and hacked; and as I hacked at the

torn and bleeding flesh, a crowd of phantom images passed in procession before my mind's eye, a thronging host of memories.

I thought of those heroes of Antiquity, whose doughty dagger-thrusts we are taught at school to admire, — or the reverse, acording as the cause they served squares with the official creed of the period or no; of intrepid hosts, storming the breach and gallantly giving to the sword every living soul that comes in their way in all the panic-maddened city, from the infant at its mother's breast to the hoary Senator in his Curule chair; of pious Captains offering up to the God of Battles the unholy blood of Unbelievers of either sex and every age, wallowing in gore to their horses' girths.

I thought of the bloody deeds our fathers and brothers are doing in war, and of those our sons *will* do; of all the mighty dramas of human carnage, some committed in the name of God, others in the name of Emperors and Kings, others again in the name of the Sovereign People, and yet others, the latest of all, in the sacred name of good government and Civilization.

And, after all these murderers famous or obscure, my blood-stained knife grasped in my fist over a

dead woman seemed a poor, pitiful thing, and I felt small indeed.

" Still ! it is not my fault, " I kept saying over and over again to myself, " that I have only one belly to knife. My chiefs told me, " kill ", and I have killed ; I have done my best. Now ! more, more ! tell me to kill again, again ! "

And brandishing my *flissa* [1] that dripped gouts of red dew, — mad and murderous, I sprang to my feet.

*
* *

" You did wrong to give him *hashish*, [2] " whispered a woman's voice ; " his brain is torn with delirium. "

1. *Flissa*, a weapon whose name is derived from a small town in Algeria where they are made. It is slightly bent with a very narrow blade-end, and forms rather an elegant arm. The handle of the flissa is generally incrusted with ivory, coral, silver, etc., and the blade engraved. The common ones have a curved wooden handle. The blade is usually very sharp and could easily slice off an opponent's head. The size of this weapon ranges from the pocket-knife to the *coupe-tête*, but the word, *flissa* is, we believe, only employed in Algiers.

2. The use of this plant, practically unknown in Europe, established itself according to the Arabian historian Makrizi (born in Cairo about 1360 and dead in 1442), first

" Pshaw ! " returned the other ; " I know how to get it out of his head again. "

I became conscious of a penetrating smell of

of all in India whence it spread throughout Persia Egypt, Syria, and other Eastern lands. In Algeria hashish takes the rank of the opium that exercises such a fascination over the present day Indians and Chinese. But this product of Asia Minor, according to Dr Bertherand (*Médecine et hygiène dès Arabes*) does not give rise to sufficiently agreeable sensations to please the sons of the desert. On the contrary the Bed'awin poets extol the praises of the fagir's or poor man's, herb, *hashishat-al-fouqarâ* so-called because " a pin's point will cause him to lift up his head proudly above that of princes".

This is no exaggeration. The grains and leaves of *hashish* cooked and made up into pastilles, to which a little sesame and sugar should be added, are considerably sought after by common-folk; a very strong liquor may also be made, capable of producing delirium and driving the drinker to " exceeding great " excesses. Makrizi, after quoting the poets on the virtues and exhilarating effects of this drug and reviewing a book wherein its efficacy is discussed, piouslv says "May God have compassion on him" — this is what our author arrives at. Let us leave these paths where men go astray, for the truth is, nothing can be more injurious to the health than this plant". *Vide* Silvestre de Sacy's *Chrestomathie Arabe*, pages 210 to 222, 1st vol. 2nd edit. *Paris*, 1826). It is said that the word *assassin* comes from this word through *hashashin*, a name given in the Crusader's time to a band of murderers who distinguished themselves as *Consumers of hashish* in addition to the throat-cutting trade.

musk, and felt something soft touching my lips lightly. Two hands were laid caressingly on my brow, and the same gentle voice challenged me :

" Come, Roumi![1] awake. La! la! la! la! awake I say... "

And I awoke, my lips nestling between Meryem's breasts.

* * *

She stood aside and looked at me with smiling eyes. Meanwhile Fathma, her elder sister, lifted a corner of the tent and showed me the plain flooded with morning sunlight.

The sun! the glorious sun! The mists of my sinister nightmare fled away before his bright beams. My bosom swelled, and a flood of ineffable content passed over me, as I turned my delighted eyes on the fair daughter of the *Ouled-Nayl*[2].

1. *Roumi* or *ouroumi* literally, a Roman, is a name given by Arabs to designate Europeans of Christian origin. For instance the great sepulchre of the Mauritanian kings west of Algiers, known as the *Tombeau de la Chrétienne*, is in Arabic *Kabr ar-Romia* (Masc. *Roumi*, fem. *Roumia*).

2. As Algeria is not yet a British Colony and does not show any signs of rapid anglicisation, English readers

But to my dismay I saw her stoop, pick up my *flissa* that was lying by the bed of goatskins and

may be excused if ignorant of the character of these charming dames. The Walad Nayl, also spelt *oueled*, *ouled*, *oulid*, *ould*, *oulyd*, plural, *oulâd*, is a people that have excited to no small extent the curiosity of the Anthropologist. In London and Paris it is considered incorrect for women to prostitute themselves either before or after marriage. Far more reprehensible is it for a man to profit by money thus earned. The Walad Nayl have a different way of regarding these things. There the more money a woman gains by the sale of her body, the greater are her chances of marriage and the greater the love of her husband. Strange to say these women are said to live a chaste life when once they are married, however shameless and abandoned they may have been when plying their trade of fornication. That widely-read Teuton Dr Ploss says :

" Exactly as it formerly was among the Lydian girls, so is it to-day in the Algerian tribe of the *Ouled Naïl*. The ancient author, Valerius Maximus, lays stress upon the immorality of the worship of Venus, which the inhabitants of the country, described as Sicca Veneria, practised. According to him, even women of good family from all parts of the Province used to flock thither, in order by the prostitution of their body to earn a sufficient dowry to bring to their future husband, and in such manner to employ the most shameful of trades for an honourable purpose. The ancient town of Sicca lay in that district, now known under the name of Goff, or Keff. It is here that at present are settled the *Uled Naïl*; Paul Caffarel, our talented friend, speaking of them, says that they form the most important Arab tribe of the Sanara, and relates of them " (P. Caffarel. *Algérie, Histoire*, etc. Paris, 1883) :

examine it with care. Then with the tip of her lit-

" The Ouled-Naïl are the most considerable of these tribes. They are divided into two great fractions, according to their position, the Cheraga in the East and Reraba in the West. They are, he considers, industrious and apt for trade, good and hospitable, but of very dissolute habits. Their daughters, much famed for their beauty, enjoy the sorry privilege of being sacrificed, from their early youth, to the mercenary Venus. Prostitution in that tribe is a positive institution. Each young girl, before getting married, goes, in the company of her mother or of an elder sister, to abandon herself to the caresses of the public. After having exercised this trade for a longer or shorter time, they return to the tribe, purchase a flock, and are the more sure to find a husband in proportion as the sum they have amassed is the more respectable. These Algerian courtesans are also in high repute as dancers ".

Von Maltzan, an observant German traveller, has also visited this tribe and relates of it as follows. (V. Maltzan, *Drei Jahre im Nordwesten von Afrika*. Leipzig, 1865) : " This ancient feature of Numidian customs still exists at present in the tribes of the Sahara. The girls of the Oulêd Naïl tribe, called *Naylya*, and also some from other tribes, are in the habit of repairing in great numbers to the towns of the Oases, much frequented by nomads and strangers, for the purpose of remaining there several years to practise the trade of an Alma (originally dancer), until they have earned sufficient money to return home a well-to do woman to find a respectable husband; in which they almost invariably succeed, for the men of the desert are jealous only of the present life, but not of the antecedents of their wives". Von Maltzan was personally acquainted with highly respected Algerian chiefs, wearing French decorations, who were not in the least ashamed

tle *henna*-dyed thumb [1], she tried its edge and the keenness of the point. My eyes followed her movements, and once more I felt the hooked talons of my evil dreams tearing at my heart. The blade was red.

" There is blood on it, " I exclaimed.

" Yes! " she answered calmly, " whoever used it last forgot to wipe it. "

She took a woollen rag and passed it slowly along the blade, leaving a great red stain on the stuff.

" My God! it is true then, " I screamed in horror, " Look, the belly! the belly I knifed! "

For at that moment my eyes fell on a heap of blood-stained remains lying in a corner a few steps away.

" True! What is true? " Meryem asked, following the direction of my gaze. " Oh! no! it's not

to marry such a prostitute in order to obtain with her the money she had earned in so disreputable a manner.

1. *Henna* in French *henné*, is the plant *lawsonia inermis* and is much used by the ladies in Asia and Africa for dyeing the nails. They take the dried leaves and reduce them to powder. It is with this preparation that they obtain that yellowish aspect of the finger and toe nails, which by them it is the custom to regard as beautiful.

the belly. It's the sheep's head and the hide. We gave the belly to the dogs. "

Then I remembered how Fathma had had a sheep killed the day before, and that I had offered my *flissa* for the sacrifice!

*
* *

After a Homeric banquet, gorged with meat and *couscous*[1] and intoxicated with love, I had lain

1. *Couscous*, sometimes *kouskous*, derives from *kaskas*, Arabic verb to crush (*broyer*), break up into small pieces. This name is given to a farinaceous dish, the component parts being of the size of small peas cooked in steam. The northern Arabs, and their neighbours the Berbers, are inordinately fond of this food, the latter calling it *souksou* and it appears to be exactly the same says Pihan (*Dict. étymologique des mots français dérivés de l'Arabe, du Persan*, etc., Paris, 1866), as what the French used to call *coscossons*, a word that is to be found in honest old Rabelais. Compare the Portuguese *cuscuz*, and the Spanish alcuzcuz.

Baron Baude thought "*couscous* better than English puddings, and a good addition to European cookery books. It forms the bread, soup, *bouilli* and dessert of the Arab. It is made of wheat bruised by the women in hand-mills, and then thrown into a great vessel shaped like a kettle-drum, a little oil being mixed with it, till it forms lumps of the size of millet grain ; after which it is boiled over steam and mixed with milk, broth, butter, etc."

down, my head resting on Meryem's lap. Then she had amused herself by making me take puffs at her little red *chibouk*[1], the bowl of which was loaded with *hashish*. I was infinitely enjoying the sensation of feeling my thoughts slipping, slipping, away from me and vanishing amid the little blue clouds of smoke, when my eyes lighted on the head and hide of the poor sheep we had been feasting on thrown down in one corner of the tent.

By the light of the dying embers, the hide, turned inside out as it was, had a strange, uncanny likeness to the belly of a human being.

Half asleep, half awake, in that comatose state in which half-formed hallucinations abound and phantoms hover, the brain oppressed with excess of food, my consciousness presented just the background on which *hashish* projects visions of blood and horror, when the uninitiated trespass on its use[2].

1. *Chibouk* or *Chibouque* is a Turkish word really signifying a cane or *baguette*, but generally means the Ottoman pipe with a long stem of cherry or jasmin wood. It is very common in the East, but should not be confounded with the Persian pipe, which is called the *narguileh*.

2. This is no overstrained description of the influence of this potent drug. Its effect differs in men according to

I forced myself to laugh at my terrors, but the laugh froze on my lips at the recollection of my whole conscious being, my every thought, thus fouled with blood. Long afterwads in fact I was still horrified when I thought of the sinister frenzy that had seized me, and the fierce delight I had experienced as I plunged, in my nightmare vision, my murderous knife into the woman's gashed and gaping belly.

In vain I tried to think what could have called up the horrid vision; for I did not then understand how a man's surroundings give their colour to his thoughts, and how with the very air he breathes, he draws in vicious ideas and foolish imaginings.

And so but few fulfil their original destiny; and

temperament. I had a friend, an English colonel, who from a long residence in the East, became rather addicted to the use of this plant and he told me that it caused him considerable *local* irritation sometimes rising to a sort of priapism, and also to frequent impulse to urinate. Hashish is of course, a positive aphrodisiac, the length of the venereal act being at once reinforced and repeated. Perhaps this is the reason why opium and hashish are so great favorites with the Oriental, and the part the former plays in Chinese brothels and *lupanars* is well-known to the traveller.

man, a straw blown about by the wind of circumstance, is the sport of the thousand and one caprices of Chance.

"*Blood, Musk and Hashish*", that is to say, — War, Love and Dreamland! Amid these heady fumes beats yet, in the wilds of our French possessions in Algeria, the great heart of a People that our European civilization stifles, — a People that is vanishing away little by little, dying out with all its wild, fierce vices and its incomparable grandeur.

These folk I would fain paint, such as I have seen them and known them for ten long years. I have elbowed my way among them, I have lain and dreamed on the same couch, I have spoken the same language, clad in their native burnouse, eating from their platter of wood, riding their horses, loving their daughters, in one word living their life, — under the tent of the Bedawin, the house of the Hadar [1], the *gourbi*

1. *Hadar* derived from *hadhar* (verb) Arabicé to reside in a town as opposed to leading a nomadic life; consequently a town-dweller, an inhabitant of cities, a citizen, the counter part of *beydawi* or *bedawi*, which the French have transmogrified into *bedouin*.

(hovel) of the Khabyle [1], on the mountain as

1. Also spelt *Kabile* from the arabic *qabâili*, from *qabâil*, plural of *qabeelat*, tribe, family people. This name is given to the numerous independent tribes inhabiting the neighbourhood of the Atlas mountains. These Kabiles, the original race of *l'Afrique septentrionale* must not be confounded with the Bedâwin, or Arabs of the wastes, nor with the Moors, Numidians, or Berbers whom one meets above all in the towns. The difference between the Arab and the the Khabyle is enormous according to General Daumas (*Mœurs et coutumes de l'Algérie.* Paris, 1858). « The Arab has black hair and eyes. Many of the Khabyles have blue eyes and red hair; their skin is generally whiter than that of the Arab. — The Arab's face is oval and his neck long, the Khabyle, on the contrary, has the face square, and his head is closer to his shoulders. — The Arab must never pass a razor over his face. Whereas the Khabyle shaves until he attains the age of five and twenty; at this age, he has come to man's estate and allows his beard to grow. This is the outward sign of acquired judgment, of matured reason. — The Arab keeps his head covered in all seasons, and when he can, he walks with his feet shod. The Khabyle, in summer as in winter, in snow or sunshine, always goes with head and feet bare. If by chance one of them is met with shoes on his feet, it is accidentally, and simply the raw skin of a beast just killed. Those who live in the neighbourhood of the plains sometimes sport the *chachia* (the Turkish *Fez*) The only garment of the Khabyle is the *chelouhha*, a sort of woollen shirt falling down below the knees, which costs from seven to eight francs; he protects his legs with knitted woollen gaiters without feet, which are called *boughcrons:* When going to work, he puts on a vast leathern apron like that worn by our regimental sappers. He wears the *Burnouse* when his means permit him

on the plain, and oftener still beneath the starry vault of heaven.

to do so, and he then keeps it indefinitely without in the least caring for its rents or its stains; he inherited it from his father, and he will leave it to his son. — The Arab lives under the tent; he is a nomad on a limited territory. The Khabyle inhabits a house; he is bound to the soil. — The Arab covers himself with talismans; he attaches some to the necks of his horses and of his sleuthhounds, to preserve them from the evil eye, from disease, or from death. He sees everywhere the effects of sorcery. The Khabyle does not believe in the evil eye and but very little in amulets. "What is written by Allah", he says, "must come to pass; nothing can prevent it". Nevertheless, he grants to certain old women the power to influence domestic or love affairs; he admits of the existence of charms to induce love, to excite hatred against a rival, or to obtain the divorce of a woman whom one desires. »

II

A GOOD JUDGE

II

A GOOD JUDGE

The hour of high market, and the great Square of the Caravanserail is full of a motley crowd. Bronzed, wild-eyed Bedawins, with patched burnouses; white-faced *Koulouglis*[1] clad in sumptuous

1. "Koulougli" derives from the Turkish *Koul* slave; and, *oughli*, sons, — the offspring of Turks and Moorish women; they are considered as an inferior caste.

This race possesses many of the qualities of the Janissaries, and is separated from the natives by manners, and by the use of the Turkish language, which they speak almost universally. They answer excellently well as mediators and channels of communication between the French and the Arabs and Khabyles.

They are generally very handsome men, having regular features, well-shaped eyes, a fair and smooth skin, strongly developed muscles, and a certain embonpoint, proceeding doubtless, from their mothers. The marriage of European with African blood can be detected in their appearance; for they have the nonchalance and haughtiness of the Turks, blended with the lymphatic temperament of the Morish women, — especially the girls, who are also invariably brought up like their mothers. Their costume is the same as that of the Moors and Turks; but they pride

robes; short-frocked Khabyles and squalid looking Biskris; filthy fawning Jews, stolid Negroes,

themselves on extreme cleanliness, and even a kind of coquetry in their dress, which is not unbecoming their character, and recalls the Asiatic *tchelebis*, — Persian for gentleman, or dandy. Almost all rich enough to do nothing, they follow no profession, scarcely taking the trouble to work, and remain for days plunged in apathy, whilst their slaves cultivate their gardens, and receive chastisement if they are not satisfied with their work. The young men study attitudes in walking, to display the beauty of their figure.

The Koulouglis are distinguished above all the races in Algeria for excessive vanity and profound ignorance. In the social machinery, before 1830, they were confounded with the Moors, and had no right to the privileges of their sires; yet they seldom had cause to fear any persecution from the Janissaries, because of the affinity existing between them. They were only required to take up arms in time of war; and their pacific character has impeded the just appreciation of their natural valour.

The Koulouglis profess the Mussulman religion, in which they are brought up; but their faith is characterised by the same indifference which they display in all the acts of life. They are not superstitious, and only attend to the forms of religion to show they believe in God. Exceeding the Turks in apathy, they do not make it a point of conscience to attend the mosques. Whilst on this subject, we must not forget to state that the Turks and Koulouglis, who are Sunnites, or orthodox Mahometans, observe the rite of Hanesi; whilst the Arabs and Berbers are Malekites. The Turkish tongue was only used in the odjak of the Janissaries and amongst the Koulouglis, and was employed for all official acts.

Caïds and beggars, *Mercantis*, Colonists and soldiers, Moorish women closely veiled, Jewesses with no veils at all, half-naked Negresses, are elbowing and pushing, trafficking and idling, in the middle of donkeys and mules, high-stepping thoroughbreds and resting camels. In the brilliant sunshine lie higgledy-piggledy heaps of watermelons, pomegranates, oranges, dates, onions, Barbary figs, — bowls of sour milk, horse-trappings embroidered in gold, broken down packsaddles, rusty bits, stirrups of damascened steel, — girdles and silken stuffs, weapons, loaves of bread, anklets, bracelets and earrings, — oil-fritters, strings of sheep's-heads, festoons of wild artichokes, — carpets, scent-bags of musk, phials of rosewater, lumps of incense, honey-cakes, — and dogs, and fleas, and lice, and children, and jewelry, and rags and tatters.

On every side strange cries, — witch-wives' cries of incantation, furious wrangles about a halfpenny piece.

Abuse flies backwards and forwards from mouth to mouth like a game of battledore and shuttlecock : cheat, fool, huckster, — *Jew*, bitterest insult of all! And heads bump together, and the

press gets thicker and thicker, and shouts of *Balek*! *Balek*! (Make way!) come from every quarter at once. All the time the open-air dealers are circulating among the different groups, offering likely customers astounding bargains with hoarse cries of *Bab Allah*! *Bab Allah*!

But far aloft on the roof of the Mosque of Salah-Bey, with its slender, graceful Minaret piercing the deep blue of the sky, the storks sit motionless on one leg, in high-shouldered dignity, gazing down impassively at all the noisy turmoil of men and cattle below.

And away beyond the Square another quarter of the picturesque town is visible. From the long terrace you look right down on a huddle of red roofs running Southwards downhill, but stopping suddenly at a narrow fissure in the rock, at the bottom of which, 500 feet below, flows the unseen Rummel with a dull roaring; beyond the green slopes of Mansourah and to the left hand, the huge gloomy precipices of Sidi-Merid.

*
* *

But it was not this panorama of the most striking city in Algeria (Constantine) that drew my

gaze. A group of Moorish women were chattering away close to my elbow; beneath the checked *moulaïas* [1] in which their forms were wrapped, you could see lurked youth and beauty, and " their great dark eyes that burned like fire " suggested, in spite of the veil, the charm of the hidden face, for with such eyes a plain woman is an impossibility.

With fell intent on our peace of mind, they showed just a peep of neat white stocking that encased their plump calves and finely cut ankles, round which they wore silver rings with little copper bells attached that tinkled out a merry music. Gay chatter, tiny foot and little red slipper, neat ankle and tinkling anklets, sparkling eyes and seductive looks, all told one tale, each said the same thing in its own particular way, and that was : " Follow me, young man! follow me! "

However one of them, afraid apparently that I was dull of comprehension, and not wishing to lose a customer, came up to me :

" Come home with me, " she said' " I have

1. " A kind of plaid composed of two pieces of cotton woven in small chequers of blue and white, or cross stripes, with a mixture of red at each end ". See art. Dress in Hughes's *Dict. of Islam*.

golden tobacco and black coffee; my name is Ourika (Rosebud), and I am oh! so pretty. "

And seeing me still hesitating, she drew aside her veil....

*
* *

But at the same moment a plump hand, with dirty finger-nails, touched me on the arm, and a voice I knew directly, whispered :

" Pretty? Well, yes! but then she is at least twenty, and for I dare say ten good years she has welcomed Arabs and Roumis indiscriminately to her alcove, and served them with coffee, *rosebud* and cigarettes. Attend to me; I want to show you a fresher fruit. When once you have set eyes on it, you will only turn them away to put your lips to the same place. "

The pretty Moorish girls slipped away laughing and were lost in the noisy crowd. Meantime the black apparition that had come between us, looked at me questioningly.

Oh, yes! I recognized her right enough. Many a time had I come across her wandering about the corridors of the old Janissaries' barracks with a crafty, cringing air. Thanks to her miserable appear-

ance, she had extorted a pass from the Quartermaster's pity, and we used to discover her at all hours of the day prowling about the rooms, begging crusts of bread, buying old silver lace, worn-out boots, left-off clothing generally, — but never paying up more than about half the price agreed upon, pilfering scraps and candle-ends, every day sent about her business, but re-appearing again next day without fail, following the precept of Jesus, whom she held accursed, grovelling under insult, kissing the boot that menaced her, and if she were kicked on the right buttock, turning the left buttock also!

But as a matter of fact no one much cared about touching, either with hand or foot, this lamentable wreck of womanhood, this senile specimen of the accursed race; and it was only after the continual disappearance of sashes and burnouses in a mysterious way that she was eventually pushed out of doors by the shoulders, and orders given to the Corporal of the Guard never to admit the creature again.

*
* *

Two years had gone by since then; but here was the same wan face and muddy complexion, -- the

same blear eyes and facile tears, the same flabby looking cheeks, the same whining sawney voice, the same dingy widow's weeds, and the same rags and general filth.

" Now attend to me, " the hag repeated. " I have served *Kebirs* (great men) of your nation; I have procured them the very joys of Paradise, and I keep their custom and their confidence to his day. But not one of them all ever hesitated so much as you do, — no! never, though I only ask you *sordis* where I should have had *douros* from them.

" You don't seem much richer for it all. "

" Alas! and alas! we poor Jews are so robbed by the Arabs and the Christians! — Now, look you! " she added, pointing to the Civil Courts, the roof of which public building could be seen alongside that of the old Palace of Bey Hadj-Ahme, among the *Hanafis*[1] one sees yonder in long black

1. *Hanif* (pl. *huna fa*) Lit. "one who is inclined". (1) Anyone sincere in his inclination to Islam. (2) One orthodox in the faith. (3) One who is of the religion of Abraham. This word occurs *ten* times in the Qur' ān. See Hughe's *Dict. of Islam* for the citations.

The term was also applied in the early stages of Islām, and before Muhammad claimed the position of an inspired

gowns with a round cap and a baby's bib at their neck, there is one in particular dressed in red, who often comes to my house when the sun is set behind Koudiat-Aty and the town is quiet. Ah, ha! *he* appreciates the fruit I offer. Now, are you coming?"

* * *

We descended the steps leading from the Square, making for the neighbourhood of the Synagogue, just above the ravine and not far from the spot where they used to throw adulteresses over into the torrent below. Then through a maze of alleys with crumbling hovels on either side and arched over at intervals by darkling vaults, we reached some steps built of fragments of Roman

prophet, to those who had endeavoured to search for the truth among the mass of conflicting dogmas and superstitions of the religions that existed in Arabia. Amongst these Hanīfs were Waragah, the Prophet's cousin, and Zaid ibn 'Amr, surnamed the Enquirer. They were known as Hanīfs, a word which originally meant "inclining one's steps toward anything", and therefore signified either a convert or a pervert. Muhammad appears from the above verses (when chronologically arranged), to have first used it for the religion of Abraham, but afterwards for any sincere professor of Islām. Here used loosely as a popular name for the learned pundits of the Law-Courts, — judges, *avocats*, and *id genus omne*.

stonework, and finally a stable at the back of which was a door, at which the Jewess knocked.

She spoke her name, and a bolt was noiselessly withdrawn. I crossed a tiny courtyard, climbed a few steps, and suddenly found myself in a little Moorish apartment, profusely ornamented with heavy gilding, and furnished with lacquered what-nots, mirrors and generally a degree of Oriental luxury I hardly looked for judging by the appearance of my guide and the sort of approaches we had come through.

Two pretty children of seven or eight, a boy and a little girl, lying at full length on a woollen rug of thick, coarse texture, looked up at me, their great eyes full of curiosity. A litter of toys, manifestly of French manufacture, a wooden horse, a doll with porcelain head, lead soldiers, a Polichinello, showed my arrival had interrupted them in their play.

" Sit down, " the good woman said, pointing me to a large cushion covered in tapestry worked with camel's hair in an intricate pattern of many hues, — the kind the women of the Souf weave, " behold the nest of Love! you are in Love's cosy nest! "

And lifting a Tunis *frechia* [1], hung across the doorway of a second small room, an alcove in fact rather than a room, the floor of which was raised a foot or so above the level of the first, she called, " Hagar! Hagar! "

* * *

The fair Hagar, a damsel of perhaps fifteen summers, with a very pretty brown face of her own, came out at once, and without further preliminaries, sat down on the floor facing me.

" Hagar is my daughter. " said the dingy widow, who looked more squalid than ever in this sumptuous chamber and beside the young girl clad in the rich costume wealthy Jews affect, — " the last of five, my stay and my pride. The little ones are my eldest daughter's children, and the hope of my old age. Go, darlings, and kiss the Christian. He is going to give you each a pretty silver bit, and your auntie will have a whole big *douro*. Ah! my son, I am very unfortunate; the good *Hanafi*, our protector, is gone with his wife to the

1. Carpet, or curtain ; " *frechia* " is evidently a vulgarism for the classical *farsh*, pl. *fouroush*, from *farash* " to stretch out ".

land of the Franks, and will not return till the month of the *Simoom* is passed. They call this their " Vacation ", for they rest then and do not judge men; but, look you! for me it is a time of distress and sore tribulation. Oh, yes! he will come back; he promised me he would; he is a pious man and his word is sacred. But meantime we must live, and my pretty dove yonder suffers, drinking only her tears and fed on privations.... A *douro*! only a *douro*.....because it is you, and because we want you to come again.....Thank you. — Now take your pleasure in peace and quietness; she is well trained, and will do all you wish. "

So saying, she went out, shutting the door discreetly behind her, leaving us alone with the children.

" Send them away, " I said to Hagar; " why didn't your mother take them off with her? Don't you see their eyes are bright with naughty curiosity? "

" Oh? — you don't want them here? " she exclaimed in great surprise. " Why! it was to please you my mother left them with us. His Reverence Ben Simoun, our Rabbi, says justly :

"Bad men gloat over enjoyment in solitude, hiding the good thing that befalleth them from all, but the good love to have spectators of their delights"; and he is a good man, is the old *Hanafi*, for he always asks for the dear children to be here. It makes him enjoy it more, he says."

Musk hashish and blood.

III

A SHORT WAY WITH THE KROUMIRS

III

A SHORT WAY WITH THE KROUMIRS[1]

I

It is many a long year ago, but my remembrance of it all is very vivid still, for it was from

1. The *Kroumirs*, or *Khroumirs* are a semi-savage, independent tribe occupying the mountains between Calle and

these incidents, I suppose, that our first adventures with the Kroumirs dated.

At that time we occupied with our *smala* [1] the *bordj* [2] of El-Meridj, an outlying fort built not long before on the Tunisian frontier, twelve leagues North-East of Tebessa and within a gun-shot of an affluent of the Oued-Mellegue [3], to wit the Oued-Hohrirh. This stream flowing deep down in its rugged, crumbling, chalky bed, oleanders bordering

Bizerte of the Mediterranean littoral where they have taken refuge from foreign domination. Their frequent incursions from Tunisian into Algerian territory provoked the intervention of the French military authorities and ultimately led to the French Protectorate of Tunis which received legal ratification in April, 1884 Some people say that the Kroumirs were paid or incited to do this by virtuous France, but this we are unwilling to believe in the absence of proofs. Their country is admirable, and much resembles the Vosges and Auvergne.

1. *Smala*, or *smalah*, an assembly of tents of a powerful chief and forming so to speak, his moveable capital. In common parlance, a numerous family; also a fortified camp occupied by Spahis (*cipayes*).

2. *Bordj*, or *borj* (pl. *borouj* or *abraj*) means a tower, castle, or citadel, a fortified structure.

3. *Oued* (wad, or wadi), a water course, a river; also a valley traversed by a river. Compare the Spanish *Guada*, in *Guadalquivir*, the great river; *Guaroman*, the river of the pomegranates; *Guadarazas* the river of lead; *Guadarama*, the sandy river, and many others.

it on either bank, separated us from the wide plain that extends from the Keff to Galah, and is dotted with the *Douars* [1] of the two Tunisian tribes of the Ouled-Sebira and the Beni Merzem.

1. *Douar*, (dowar) the plural of *dár*, a group of Arab tents or families representing a tribe, several *dowars* uniting for safety form a *farka* and the chiefs of each circle or group of tents, compose together a *jama'a*, or council to watch over the common interests of the *farka*; one amongst them, on account either of his superior nobility, age, intellect or energy, being appointed the president of the assembly.

These tents are composed of black or brown stuff, are of an oblong form, and supported by stakes, which moreover answer the purpose of suspending clothes, arms, harness, &c. No beds are found in them, the Bedouins rolling themselves up at night in a haikh. The middle of the douar is commonly empty, like a court; and each family possesses in general two tents, one for the family, the other for the cattle.

The simplicity, or rather poverty of the family is remarkable, their household only comprising the following articles; some camels, goats, and fowls, a mare and its harness, a tent, a lance thirteen feet long, a curved sword, a musket, a pipe, a pot, a hand-mill, a coffee-pot, a mat, some clothes, and some gold or silver rings for the woman's wrists and ankles. With these the Arab is rich.

A night in a douar is distressing to Europeans, the fleas and musquitoes allowing their victims no rest. This veritable plague is so deleterious, by depriving you of your rest, that it greatly debilitates the French troops, colonists, and visitors, rendering them unfit for work and ill, many

Some time before the Cheaias, a section of the Kroumirs, had made an irruption so far with their tents and their flocks and herds, flying before the tax-collectors of the Bey of Tunis, who supported by a regular army fell upon them like a hurricane, finally leaving them stripped as naked as a field of barley after the passage of a cloud of locusts. It so happened that to escape these foes, they crossed the frontier; but doing so, they tumbled right in the midst of our *goums* [1], and these watchful guardians of French territory harried them without mercy.

Then, having neither stock nor grain left, and not a tent to shelter them, these unfortunates, pursued from the rear and pillaged from the front, took to making reprisals.

There were numberless incursions and frequent skirmishes among the frontier tribes. Algerians and Tunisians, first one then the other, would

having died in consequence. The Arab women anoint themselves with oil to keep off these enemies.

1. This word, employed only in Algiers, means the contingent of fighters that each tribe furnishes for military expeditions against another tribe. It also signifies an armed gathering of Arab cavaliers, and is derived from the Arabic *koum*, a people, sect, family, from the root, *kámá*.

cross the frontier, raiding sheep, oxen, camels, horses, and occasionally wives and maids. Chaouias and Cheaias, the one as great thieves as the other, both equally poor and equally brave, gave and took the same hard knocks.

Now the *bordj* of El-Meridj, just built by the orders of General Desveaux, commanding in chief in the Province of Constantine, on the site chosen by the Colonel of Spahis [1] Flogny, commanding the district of Tebessa, was put there for the very purpose of pacifying this particular section of the frontier by putting an end once and for all to these mutual quarrels, and all these raids and counter-raids.

1. The origin of this word is found in the Persian *Sipâhi*, « Cavalier », derived from *sipah* « a troop of horse ». In Turkey, the *corps* of Sipahis, the institution of which is attributed to Mourad I, was divided into two classes and used the sabre and the javelin; but, since the introduction of the new military system by Selim III, the Sipahis, like the rest of the Turkish troops, have been disciplined on European lines. In Algiers, the Spahis, employed by the French, are divided into regular and irregular, the former being constantly in service and composed for the most part of natives; the latter, recruited amongst the natives, European colonists, and members of various conquered tribes, forming the reserve and only to serve if called out. The uniform of these men is quite in Oriental taste, and very showy; *Cipaye* and *sepoy*, are evidently words derived from *sipahi*.

However this purpose was far from being fulfilled just at first, and divided as we were from the Regency simply by a stream, fordable in Summer at several spots, we were ourselves for a long time exposed to the reckless attacks of the Tunisian freebooters.

Then again, the very tribes we were there to protect, in as much as our presence hindered them from making reprisals as they would otherwise have done, were continually addressing complaints to the Commandant of the District as to robberies of which they declared themselves the victims on the part of the section of the Kroumirs that had once been raided by them.

The Kroumirs in fact got the credit of every misdeed, so evil was their reputation.

Thefts of the Beni Merzem, the Ouled Sebira, the Ouled Embarkem, were all in our eyes crimes done by the Kroumirs. All the robbers of the whole frontier, be their tribe what it might, — we lumped them all together under this one generic name.

Complaints grew so frequent that the Officer in command of the *smala*, Captain F*** was ordered to have the plain patrolled day and night by

parties of Spahis, with orders to arrest every native going armed.

Now as the Arabs[1] never, — and least of all the frontier tribes, — start on a journey without a musket on the shoulder and a *flissa* in the girdle, the *silos*[2] of the *bordj* were very soon crammed with prisoners.

1. The Arab tribes may be divided into three classes : those inhabiting the Tell; those holding the plateaux in the more elevated districts; and, thirdly, the Djeridi of the oases. The first, who are agriculturists, inhabit that part of Northern Africa called the Tell, bounded by the Mediterranean to the north, and often by the mountains of the Lesser Atlas to the south, though, as we have previously seen, the district called Tell stretches farther inland in the east than in the west of Algeria. This country is in general very fertile, with good crops. The second class, belonging to the pastoral society, live in the plateaux between the Tell and the oases which, though not so rich in grain, afford very goods spots for pastures : they also roam over the vast plains of the Sahara. The third class inhabit the Ksours, and carry on the barter and carrier trade of the interior. A simpler and shorter division is that into Tellians and Saharians, previously noticed.

The influence of blood-relationship, aristocratic government, and the love of roaming, are common to all these classes and subdivisions. The Tellians, being agriculturists, are less addicted to roving than the Saharians, who, being shepherds and carriers, are always on the move for fresh pastures or for speculation.

2. *Silos*, subterranean granaries for corn, a cavern, or

These were despatched in batches to the Bureau Arabe[1] at Tebessa, where the officials after an examination that could not but be summary in the extreme, either released them or sent them on to Constantine.

As generally happens under such circumstances, peaceful husbandmen of the plain were sent to rot in the Provincial prisons of Algeria or were transported to the hulks of Cayenne, while highway marauders and professional brigands were adjudged to be free from the least taint of crime. It was not long before our patrols caught red-handed in the act of robbery sundry *Kroumirs* who had been previously arrested by them and then released by order of the Bureau.

The Commandant of the *Smala* complained, and received a sharp answer. He was told it was his business to take measures; he had been specially detailed for the purpose of maintaining peace among the frontier tribes, and was responsible for the consequences.

other profound and obscure place, hence a temporary prison, or place of detention.

1. The term « bureau arabe » means the military administration that was devised to put down the native insurrections in Southern Algeria during the Second French Empire, and still exists.

So, sick of complaints from the one side and snubbings from the other, and particularly sick of the continual thefts he had to put up with, he determined *to do justice himself*. Such had been the universal practice in all outlying posts ever since the conquest of the country; and General Négrier, whose name is to this day a terror to the Arabs, used to do justice himself, to use the recognized phrase, in the eyes of all men on the great Square de la Breche at Constantine itself by the sword of his faithful *Chaouch* [1] Braham.

After this, whenever our Spahis met an armed native on the roads, they subjected him to a short and sharp interrogatory.

"Where are you going?"

"To get in the harvest at the Meskiana."

"Why do you carry a gun?"

"You are Mussulmans; can you ask such a

1. *Chaouch*, General Daumas says it is difficult to give an exact idea of this word. The « chaouch » appears to mean a *factotum*, his functions differing according to the authority of his employer; here he may be an office-clerk, there a police agent, and even an executioner or headsman. Littré derives the word from (Turkish) *chiaoux*, a kind of usher, or ambassador. La Fontaine employs this word (Fable I, 12). In the text « chaouch » means of course, the headsman.

question? You know right well an Arab never quits his gun."

"You are a Kroumir?"

"By the head of the Prophet, I am of the Beni-Merzem. You may see from here the tents of my *douar* away beyond the river, at the foot of Bou-Djaber."

"Has not your Caïd [1] warned you? The Bureau Arabe has made it known by the market-criers in every village that they would arrest every man found with arms."

"Allah empty your saddles! You know yourselves the thing is not possible, nor is it just, on the frontier. As well cast us naked before the lion's mouth."

1. *Caïd* also *kaid*, though it should be *qaïd*, because deriving from the Arabic *qād*, to lead, or guide, means a governor, chief. In the Barbary States, the title signifies the governors of provinces or cities, or military leaders who command at least 500 men. I agree with Pihan that the etymologists have erred in giving to this word the sense of *judge* or *cadi*, as it belongs evidently to a different root. The title of *caïd* (or *alcaïd* with the article), known in Spain from the time of the Moorish domination, indicates an official invested with the care and defence of a castle, and whose powers and attributes are consequently different to those of *alcade*, a kind of municipal functionary, or civil judge.

He would be dragged off to the *Bordj*, and there questioned again. If his answers seemed satisfactory, if he could name some one ready to vouch for him, if he *looked* honest, he would be dismissed after two or three days of *silo*. If he could not fulfil these conditions, — well! the Captain sent for Ali-bel-Kassem.

II

There was good stuff in Ali-bel-Kassem. He was a tall lamp-post of a man, with a skin of copper: his jet-black beard was sprinkled with a few white hairs, and cut to a point like Mephistopheles'. Thin, bony and angular, he had a gallows-look in spite of the rosary with ivory beads that he always wore round his neck. The Spahis called him the *Grand Champêtre*, a corruption of *Garde-Champêtre* [1], an office he had been invested with in the *smala* and which he held *in commendam* with that of Corporal.

"Ali-bel-Kassem?"

He came at once, always punctual and always

1. *Garde-champêtre*, corresponds to our rural constable.

ready. A smile was on his lips; he was clean, and a fine figure of a soldier spite of a back something bowed by long hours of lolling, jog-trot journeys on horseback. He had a good seat on his tall black stallion; with its intelligent eye, and look of gentle sadness.

" What business had the creature to be sad? " we used to ask one another with a laugh.

However the tragedies he looked on at so often at his master's orders seemed to be reflected in the sombre gaze of his dark eyes.

" Ali! "

" Here, *Koptane*! "

" A prisoner, " the Captain would say, and merely point out the man with a gesture.

Then Ali would cast a comprehensive look at him that travelled from head to foot, — the look of a father and of a beast of prey rolled into one.

" Right about with you, " he cried in a pleasant, hearty voice.

The prisoner went to the right about.

" Hands open and above the head ! "

The prisoner raised his hands above his head.

" No arms under the burnouse? "

" No, Sidi! "

" Throw your money on the ground. "

" No money, Sidi ! "

" Listen to me; if you *have* any money, you won't come afterwards complaining you've been robbed of it. '"

" I have not a *sordi* [1]. "

The inspection thus satisfactorily concluded, he ordered the man to stand aside a few paces; and then, silent and steady, bridle in his left hand, the right on his thigh, head up and shoulders well back but not too stiff, as the regulations prescribe, he waited his superior officer's orders.

" Take him to Tebessa, to the Bureau Arabe there, " the Captain said loud enough for the prisoner to hear. Ali bent his head, then stooping to the officer's ear and speaking low :

" Forced march, *Koptane* ? "

" Yes! forced march. Must be there in three quarters of an hour ! "

Three quarters of an hour ! Tebessa, as we have seen, was just twelve leagues from the *bordj*.

The *Grand Champêtre* smiled a knowing smile. Ile knew what the phrase meant, and the humour of it tickled him. The Captain's witticism was the

1. A small piece of money, a sou; a centime.

same every time, but every time Ali appreciated it with fresh gusto.

" Three-quarters of an hour! Ha! ha! ha! all right! *Koptane*! — Now, my man, quick march! "

He drew himself up in his saddle, proud and dignified, with a grave face that showed he felt himself entrusted with a confidential task and realized the importance it conferred upon him. They left the *bordj* by the Great Gate, sallying out onto the high ground from which you can look right away over the Tunisian plain; and the prisoner would see once more the smoke from his native *douar* floating away and vanishing in the soft mists of the blue distance.

Or, if the *douar* was near at hand, he could sometimes distinguish the white figures of the women, anxiously looking out for his return.

The sentry, sitting on the ground with his back to the wall of the Fort, his sword between his knees, and his loaded musket within reach of his hand, greeted them with a friendly nod as they went by :

" *Essalam-ou-Aleikoum*[1] ! Greeting be upon your heads! "

1. *As-Salâm aleykoum* (Peace be upon, or with, you), is

"*Alek Salam!* On your head be greeting!" they returned with one voice.

Presently the way began to descend. They made a circuit, leaving the *bordj* on the right hand;

used only by and to Muslims, the answer being, *Wa-aleyk as-Salâm wa Rahmat -Ullah wa Barakâtuh*, "and on you be Peace and the Mercy and Blessings of God", which is generally shortened to *Aleyk as-Salâm*, the longer formula being used only by very devout persons. The following Quranic passages show how careful was Muhammad clearly to define the correct application of these greetings, far different from the vulgar London *How d'ye do?* or *How goes it?* or the Parisian, *Comment ça roule-t-il?* or *Ça boulotte-t-il bien?* often to be heard on the French boulevards.

There is a quiet strength and dignity in these forms of greeting which remind us forcibly of Puritan England times.

Muhammad instructed his people as follows regarding the use of the Salutation :

Surah XXIV, 61 : « When ye enter houses, then greet each other with a salutation from God, the Blessed and the Good. »

« The person riding must salute one on foot, and he who is walking must salute those who are sitting, and the small must salute the larger, and the person of higher degree the lower. It is therefore a religious duty for the person of high degree, when meeting one of a lower degree; the giving of the Salām being regarded as a benediction. For » says Muhammad, « the nearest people to God are those who salute first, When a party is passing, it is sufficient if one of them give the salutation, and, in like manner, it is sufficient if one of the party return it of those sitting down. »

then went down into the rudimentary village made up of French, Maltese, Italians, Jews, a whole horde of thieves, whose tents and hovels were ranged in a broken line along the slope of hillside. Spahis, squatting under the wattled walls of the *Caouadjis*[1], were drinking coffee, lei-

1. *Caouadji.* This word, widely used in Algiers and the Protectorate of Tunis, means "Coffeehouse-dealer", deriving from the Arabic *qahwa* and the Turkish termination *haji or hadji.* The word *kahwa*, according to Fakhr-ed-Din quoted in De Sacy's *Chrestomathie* (vol. I, p. 442-481), is derived from the root *ikha*, which means *opposition, dislike*, or from the same root in its meaning of *abstention*, because *kahwa* was said to beget a dislike for food. The spread of this beverage forms a most curious chapter in the history of civilisation. " Its peculiar property of dissipating drowsiness and preventing sleep was taken advantage of in connection with the prolonged religious services of the Mahometans, and its use as a devotional antisoporific stirred up a fierce opposition on the part of the strictly orthodox and conservative section of the priests.

Coffee was by them held to be an intoxicant, and therefore prohibited by the Koran; and the dreadful penalties of an outraged law were held over the heads of all who became addicted to its use. Notwithstanding the threats of divine retribution, and though all manner of devices were adopted to check its growth, the coffee-drinking habit spread rapidly among the Arabian Mahometans, and the growth of coffee as well as its use as a national beverage became as inseparably associated with Arabia as tea is with China. For about two centuries the entire supply of

surely, in little cups. Others from time to time would dip their hand to the bottom of the deep hood of their burnouse, and draw out a morsel of biscuit and a handful of dates, — their morning meal, — or a pinch of tobacco to make a cigarette. Others again, stretched full length on their mat of *alpha*-grass, head on hand, eyes half closed in a drowsy dream, were humming to a slow dragging air some ballad of war or love :

Kradidja's brows and lids, Kradidja's hair,
Are dark as night ;
They're swords to pierce men's hearts, — beware ! beware !
And sting the sight.

They broke off their song to watch the Kroumir go by, saying like the sentry :

" Greeting be on your head ! "

Two or three, without rising, held out a hand to offer their cup still half full of coffee :

" Drink, the way will be hot. "

And Ali-bel-Kassem, with an indulgent fatherly smile, reined in his horse.

the world, which, however, was then limited, was obtained from the province of Yemen in South Arabia, where the celebrated Mocha or Mokha is still cultivated".

" Yes ! the way will be hot. Drink, my son ! "

Then when the prisoner handed back the empty cup with thanks, they would wish him success on his journey :

" May your day be happy ! "

" May your belly never be hungry !

III

But the *mercantis*, dealers in drugged absinthe and doctored wines, swindlers, bankrupts, gaol-birds, traders of every stamp, standing at the door of their huts and tents and *gourbis* (shanties) bursting with spoiled goods of every description, would shout to the Corporal of Spahis :

" Oh, ho ! *Grand Champêtre*, my man ! another Kroumir ! But why take him all the way to Tebessa ? Polish him off in the bush, I tell you, 'Twill always be a ruffian the less. "

" March ! Quick march ! " Bel-Kassem would order, without condescending even to cast a look at the beggarly rabble.

And the prisoner would resume his way, his lifted chin and unwavering eye expressing the

utmost scorn. Yet he hurried past, for he felt his ears burn, brave man as he was, and an Arab and a bold highwayman, at the laughter and ribald jests of these cowardly Christian pickpockets.

Soon they left the village behind, and entered the stony track that led towards Tebessa, winding between broom and dwarf palms and heath, what the *mercantis* call *the bush*, already stung by the sharp scorching of the morning sun.

The man walked fast. True he no longer heard the Roumis' insulting laugh, but he felt the horse's hot breath on the back of his neck.

Presently a delightful smell of fresh water became perceptible, and the sound of a waterfall. There was at this point, just where the road makes a sharp bend, a charming spot, buried in oleanders.

When the wild flowers were in bloom, brightening with their brilliant colours the dark green of the foliage, it was a bit of heaven. Gay butterflies and beetles and dragon-flies swarmed in thousands, and the breeze blew with a gentle, flattering softness. Only *houris* were lacking to this terrestrial Paradise, and even *these* were to be seen at times descending in a merry band from the *douars*, arms

and legs bare, to draw water in the river that clattered along in its deep bed, tumbling over great boulders of rock fallen from its banks during the last great storm, and forming falls and rapids and stretches of foam that threw off sparkles of all the colours of the rainbow in the sun. Red partridges would come to the pools to drink, while great brown hares looked on from the covert of the *diss*-tufts with ears pricked inquisitively.

This was the spot where we used to meet on stifling summer afternoons the girls of the *Chaouias*, and make love to them, a pistol always within arm's reach, and our horse's bridle in one hand.

The frontier was here, three-quarters of an hour from the *bordj* and the village of El-Meridj; and here Ali-bel-Kassem, keeping a keen look-out the while, relaxed his pace.

So the other relaxed his pace too, and no longer feeling the horse's nose at his back, began to recover breath again.

He sniffed the refreshing breeze and delighted with the shady nook before him turned round and said :

" I beg a favour, Sidi. For eight days, as you know, I was buried alive without water in the

filth of a *silo*; in the name of the Prophet give me leave to perform the *oudou el serir*.[1]"

1. The religion of Islam makes two ablutions, the *wuzu'-al-Kabir* (great ablution) and the *wuzu'-as saghir* (small ablution) absolutely obligatory upon its followers. The latter is performed before each of the five prayers which the Moslem is enjoined to make in the twenty-four hours. They are entitled:

Salat al-fajar,... day-break prayer;
Salat ath-thahar,... afternoon prayer;
Salat al-Aser,... three o'clock prayer;
Salat al-Moghreb,... sunset prayer;
Salat al-A'sha,... eight o'clock prayer;

The *wuzu' al-Kabir*, which is also termed the *wuzu'-al-jenaba*, or "laving of the loins" is governed by certain conditions of Islamic ritual, some of them being of a perfectly intimate nature, such as the cleansing of man, or woman, after copulation, and into which we cannot here enter. Hughes in his *Dictionary of Islam* (London, 1885) gives the following description of the way these ablutions are carried out: "The worshipper, having tucked up his sleeves a little higher than his elbows, washes his hands three times; then he rinses his month three times, throwing the water into it with his right hand. After this, he, with his right hand, throws water up his nostrils, snuffing it up at the same time, aud then blows it out, compressing his nostrils with the thumb and finger of the left hand, this being also performed three times. He then washes his face three times, throwing up the water with both hands. He next washes his right hand and arm, as high as the elbow, as many times, causing the water to run along his arm from the palm of the hand to the elbow, and in the same manner he washes the left. Then he draws his wetted right hand

How can a true servant of God refuse a prisoner as he passes near a river the right to make " the minor ablution " ? Ablution is as holy a thing as prayer itself; and the pious Bel-Kassem would be the last man to think of preventing it.

" Do so, " he replied, unfastening the rosary from his neck; " I will give you time enough, — as long as I shall take to pronounce the nine and ninety names of Allah ! "

And he began to tell the ivory beads one by one, leisurely, — murmuring as each passed through his fingers one of the names of God :

God the Mighty ;

over the upper part of his head, raising his turban or cap with his left. If he has a beard, he then combs it with the wetted fingers of his right hand, holding his hand with the palm forwards, and passing the fingers through his beard from the throat upwards. He then puts the tips of his fore-fingers into his ears and twists them round, passing his thumbs at the same time round the back of the ears from the bottom upwards. Next, he wipes his neck with the back of the fingers of both hands, making the ends of his fingers meet behind his neck, and then drawing them forward. Lastly, he washes his feet, as high as the ankles, and passes his fingers between the toes. During this ceremony, which is generally performed in less than three minutes, the intending worshipper usually recites some pious ejaculations of prayers".

God the Merciful;

God the Just;

God the Unchanging;

God the Master of the Hour.

Meanwhile the Bedawin slipping down the chalky slope of the river-bank and crouching on the brink of the stream was bathing his face and plunging his legs and arms in the water with keen enjoyment.

Sitting motionless on his motionless horse on the bank above, and never taking his eye for a moment off his prisoner, the *Grand Champêtre* proceeded with his Litany :

God the Ever-Living;

God the Most High;

God the All-Forgiving;

Then when he had made an end, he repeated to himself the verse :

..... The Prophet saith : " Whomsoever Death shall find when his lips are moved in prayer, in the midst of a praiseworthy deed or act of devotion, the same is blessed[1]. "

1. The title *Allah* is called the *Ismu 'z-Zat*, or, the essential name of God. All other titles, including *Rabb* (Lord), being considered *Asmá'u 's-Sifát*, or " attributes " of the

So saying, he carefully replaced the rosary about his neck, outside his red burnouse, carried his hand to the butt of his pistol, drew it out gently from the holster, and cocked it softly.

Then bending forward in the saddle and steadying his fore-arm on the horse's shoulder, he took a leisurely aim for two or three seconds.

" 'Tis by order of the accursed Christian dogs; but by the glorious Koran, you will rise up to accuse them, when the sun shall be crumpled up

Divine Being. These attributes are called *al-Asmá'u' l-husna*, or the "excellent names". The expression occurs in the Qur'ân (Sûrah. VII, 179), " But God's are *excellent names*, call on Him thereby ". This verse is commented upon in the traditions, and Abû Hurairah says that Muhammad said, " Verily, there are ninety-nine names of God, and whoever recites them shall enter into Paradise".

The attributes of God as expressed in the ninety-nine names, are divided into the *asmá'u 'l-jalálujah*, or the glorious attributes, and the *asmá'u 'l-jamáliyah*, or the terrible attributes. Such names as *ar-Rahim*, "the Merciful", *al-Karim*, "the Kind", and *al 'Afuw*, "the Forgiver", belonging to the former; and *al-Quarvi*, " the Strong ", *al Muntaqim* " the Avenger ", and *al-Qardi*, " the Powerful ", to the latter.

In praying to God it is usual for the worshipper to address the Almighty by that name or attribute which he wishes to appeal to. For example, if praying for pardon, he will address God as either *al-Afuco*, " the Pardoner ", or *at-Fauwáb*, " the Receiver of Repentance ".

in the sky, and the leaf of the Great Book unrolled. That day their reckoning shall be a fearful reckoning, and their abiding place Gehenna! But you, — you will be filled with joy, for you will have crossed the *Sirat*[1]! Farewell, brother! the Archangel Gabriel will take you, and you shall look on the face of the Great Master. "

He muttered the words between his teeth, like

1. "Sirat", taken literally, means " a road". The word occurs in the Qur'ân thirty-eight times, in nearly all of which it is used for the *Sirâtu 'l-Mustaqîm*, or the "right way" of religion. In Muslim traditions and other writings it is more commonly used for the *bridge* across the infernal fire, which is described as finer than a hair and sharper than a sword, and is beset on each side with briars and hooked thorns. The righteous will pass over it with the swiftness of the lightning, but the wicked will soon miss their footing and will fall into the fire of hell. (*Mulla 'Alî Qarî*, p. 110.)

Muhammad appears to have borrowed his idea of the bridge from the Zoroastrian system, according to which the spirits of the departed, both good and bad, proceed along an appointed path to the " bridge of the gatherer " (*chinvat peretu*). This was a narrow road conducting to Heaven or Paradise, over which the souls of the pious alone could pass, whilst the wicked fell into the gulf below. (Rawlinson's *Seventh Oriental Monarchy*, p. 636.)

The Jews, also, believed in the bridge of hell, which is no broader than a thread, over which idolaters must pass. (*Midrash, Yalkut, Reubeni, sect. Gehinnom.*)

a pious worshipper in prayer, while he got his sight on the back of the man's neck.

" Go in peace, my son. It is written ! " And so saying, he shot his man dead. He seldom missed. If he *did*, he gave the *coup de grâce* with his cavalry-sword. The body would roll over and over, and finally disappear in the torrent. Sometimes the wind blowing from the summits of the Bou-Djaber would carry the report as far as to the village of El-Meridj.

" Do you hear that? " the *mercantis* would remark to each other. " Those foul Kroumirs again, I warrant, — murdering honest men in broad daylight. The insolence of the beggarly blackguards ! "

IV

THE PATRIARCH

IV

THE PATRIARCH

A little maid, no higher *than that*, puny looking and thin as a lath. Her blue petticoat was open either side, showing her little slim thighs to the hips. Her chest was bare, and you could see the prominent ribs, and two tiny breasts beginning to show, each no bigger than a half-pomegranate. Ten years old, — perhaps eleven! Yonder, on the plains of the *Souf*, the girls mature faster as a rule; but fever, or hardship, or vice, — or may be all three demons together, — had put back her time of blossoming.

Well! well! at any rate neither fever nor hardship nor vice hindered a broad, merry smile from spreading over the little negress's lips, — lips that formed a wide scarlet riband to set off the dazzling ivory of her teeth. She laughed, and laughed, — for a yellow silk kerchief, brand new, was wound about her close-curling hair, and from her ears

hung quivering two great rings of copper. An hour ago she had made her "great ablution" at the fountain of the *ksour*, and drying herself in the sun the while, she was washing the rag that served her for a *gandourah*. She was clean, and bright, and fresh ; she smelt of musk as on *festa*-days, and her great eyes that glittered like two carbuncles lighted up her queer little black face.

*
* *

It was her grandfather that led her towards me. I seemed to see one of the three magi approaching, the wise men of the East who came to greet the child Jesus one Christmas night long ago : so venerable and se dignified was his appearence.

He was an old man of sixty. A white beard, short and woolly, framed his black, deeply furrowed face, while a dirty turban was twisted round his head. As thinly clothed as the child, he only wore a burnouse, which half a century of hard wear had converted into a sort of open lace-work, and which just now and again veiled the patriarch's nakedness.

Bent somewhat under the weight of years, the

desert storms and the stress of life generally, he leant as he walked on a long staff, wielding it with as much proud dignity as ever did the old Shepherd Kings the pastoral crook that was the sceptre of their sovereignty.

By way of frankincense and myrrh and other costly Biblical perfumes, he brought with him only a strong smell of unwashed male. This he lavished about him profusely, — and charged nothing!

"Greeting be upon your head, Roumi!" he said, kissing my shoulder respectfully, "lo! here is the maid you are expecting."

So saying, he pushed the little negress forward. The girl made a sort of half-hearted resistance, throwing back the upper part of her body with a slight twisting of hips and shoulders, like a spoilt child that wants to be pressed to do something, her mouth all the while widening, widening so with satisfaction that you could not help thinking she was going to bite her own ears.

Deuce take me if I was expecting *anyone*, — least of all this little negro maid.

"Why!" I cried, astounded, "why! negro, what do you want of me?"

*
* *

I had arrived only that very morning at the *ksour*, for the purpose of occupying an outpost with a dozen native Spahis. I knew absolutely nobody in the place; and I was expecting nothing, as I sat there under a lifted corner of the tent, smoking my cigarette in silence and gazing out at the great sandy plain blotched here and there with stunted bushes reddening in the rays of the setting sun. My word, no! I was not expecting anyone except my sergeant Messaoud. I had sent him into the *ksour* to find me an Arab to be man-of-all-work, as my Orderly had been bitten by a *leffah* (horned viper), as we were leaving Zezibet-el-Oued. In less than an hour he had gone to the arms of Israfil, and the limited number of my men made it impossible for me to detach one of them from his military duties to attend to me.

"They have been making game of you, negro! I am expecting nobody."

"The wise man should be ever expecting," replied the old mage sententiously, — "ever expecting evil as well as good. When it is the evil

that comes, he meets it unmurmuring; but when it is good that drops from the sky, the man's name is *fool* who should refuse to stoop to pick it up. Lo! it is the good that comes to you! Stoop, honoured Sir! and pick it up."

Then placing the girl before me, he continued:

"She is called *Black Pearl*, and is the child of my daughter Zouza. Now pick up your treasure-trove! Take her: "you will not find her like every day on the Desert road."

"But what should I do with her?"

"Your sergeant, Sidi-Messaoud, has been inquiring in the *ksour* on your behalf for a servant. Servant-man or servant-maid, — I thought it mattered little to you. She will kindle your fire and sweep your tent. She will make your coffee and prepare the *couscous* for you. She will go and cut you tufts of *alpha*-grass or *diss* for your bed, and will arrange your saddle in such wise that at night you will find it make a soft pillow for your head. In brief, all service you ask of her, she will give willingly as far as her powers go. In return, you will pay me a *douro* each month, and you will feed her with what is left over from your table. Sir! I am a poor man, and the child is hungry. Do

us this kindness, and at the day of judgement, *Rahman* the merciful [1] will never call to mind how you were counted among the Christians."

With these words he pushed the child beneath the tent in spite of all my protests. Then stretching out a long, bony, black hand :

"Pay the *douro*; for a month, the Pearl is yours."

* * *

The little negress sat crouching in a corner, her back leaning egainst a bag of barley beside my saddle. Silent and motionless, the broad smile still on her lips, she kept her great eyes fixed on me, surprise and a shade of anxiety in her look.

"What am I to do with you?" I asked her.

"What you please, Sidi."

"Oh, ho! what I please; but then I must know what I can use you for."

"I know how to light a fire, to sweep out a a tent, to make *couscous*."

1. One of the names given to "Allah" and used by millions of Moslems every hour in the classic phrase Bismillahi-Rahmani-Raheem (In the Name of God the Merciful, the Compassionate).

"That is not enough."

"Oh! I know how to wash a turban too, and how to put a nose-bag full of barley on a horse's nose."

"What else?"

"I will sit by you when you take your siesta, and with a banana leaf I will keep off the flies that come to disturb your sleep."

"But I have a mosquito-net."

"I will wake you at dawn, — at whatever hour you bid me."

"But that is the trumpeter's business. I shall not want you for any of these things."

"Tell me what you *do* want."

"You must black my boots."

"You shall teach me how."

"Furbish up my sword and my spurs."

"You shall teach me how."

"Clean my accoutrements."

"You shall teach me how."

"And my horse's harness."

"You shall teach me how."

"You are very willing, indeed, my little black Pearl. But if I am to teach you everything and show you how to do it all, I am very much

afraid I shall have all the work on my hands for many a long day yet. What else can you do?"

"She looked at me steadily, displaying her beautiful white teeth.

"Yes! what else?" I asked.

And she replied, without the least embarrassment :

"I know how to love men, Sidi!"

"Love! love! — at your age! And who was it taught you?"

Then the little Negress, pointing in the direction of the *Ksour*. showed me the old Patriarch of the Soudan wending his dignified way homewards along the rocky path.

"It was the old man," she said, "yonder!".

V

STOLEN, — A HEN!

V

STOLEN, — A HEN!

I

" The fourth! great Heavens, the fourth in a week! !" swore Lieutenant Fortescu, after he had verified the fact that another hen was missing from the hen-house of the Officers' mess of the Squa-

IV

THE PATRIARCH

A little maid, no higher *than that*, puny looking and thin as a lath. Her blue petticoat was open either side, showing her little slim thighs to the hips. Her chest was bare, and you could see the prominent ribs, and two tiny breasts beginning to show, each no bigger than a half-pomegranate. Ten years old, — perhaps eleven! Yonder, on the plains of the *Souf*, the girls mature faster as a rule; but fever, or hardship, or vice, — or may be all three demons together, — had put back her time of blossoming.

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dron. " Skulking ruffians, those Zouaves[1]! thieving jackals and scoundrels! "

Now that very morning his Captain, Captain Fleury, had said at breakfast :

" Fortescu, you must keep a sharper look out!

1. Much confusion seems to exist amongst Englishmen regarding these men. According to Marshal de Castellane (*Souvenirs de la vie militaire en Afrique*, Paris, 1852), the Zouaves are a fabulous and historical troop, renowned alike for extravagant daring and for disorderly behaviour and rascality. They were organised by M. de Lamoricière soon after the French conquest of Algiers, and their uniform was much the same as the Turkish costume, with green turbans. The regiment was partly formed out of bodies of French troops called *volontaires Parisiens* and *bataillons de la Charte*; and the *Maréchal* adds, that these fire-eaters were lead up the breach at Constantine, in 1837, by Lamoricière, amidst a tempest of bullets, through springing mines and a chaos of ruins. Again at the Siege of Zaatsha, in 1848, Colonel Canrobert (raised later to the rank of General, and subsequently becoming *le dernier des maréchaux de France*), addressed them thus : — " Whatever happens, we must scale these walls; and if the retreat is sounded, remember, Zouaves, it is not for you ". These men remind one strongly for their sheer " cussedness " and pure rascality, of the " ragged rascals " (88th Connaught Rangers) of Picton. All of them picked men, they are generally of rather short stature, broad-shouldered, deep-breasted, and bull-necked ; much more serviceable men for mountain-climbing and forced marches than our six-foot grenadiers. They are brave, hardy soldiers, but sly, *mauvais sujets*.

You are caterer to the mess, and you let the Zouaves laugh in your teeth. The cook declares he has lost three hens since they made their camp near the *Bordj*. "

Here was a pretty disaster! — a fourth disappeared.

So for a good hour there he was examining the poultry, counting and re-counting them! Finally as they were going home to roost, the cock at the head of the procession, dignified and self-satisfied, as unruffled as though nothing whatever were the matter, the idiotic fowl! — he had duly verified the terrible fact : there was undoubtedly one short at the roll-call. " Great heavens, the fourth hen in one short week! "

" Trumpeter, sound for the Quartermaster. "

So saying, he began to pace the courtyard of the Fort with every sign of the liveliest anger, letting his old cutty-pipe go out in his preoccupation. He never let the hen-house out of his sight, hoping every moment to see the dilatory bird run up to rejoin its companions. Meantime Villerval, the trumpeter, half drunk as usual, turned the brazen mouth of his instrument to each of the four points of the compass in turn, and blew his rousing :

"Ho! barrack-yard watch-dog! holloa! holloa!!

"Ho! barrack-yard watch-dog! holloa! holloa!!

in fourfold repetition.

The barracks watch-dog, at that particular period Quartermaster Pechiné, was just finishing his seventh glass of absinthe in company with the *Marchef* [1] in the arbour of the Canteen, cracking somewhat highly flavoured jokes the while with pretty little Mother Jardret, lawful wife of Jardret, Canteen-keeper and farrier.

Like a good-natured soul and no Puritan, she was not backward in repartee and gave him a good Roland for his Oliver. She had a loud, staccato, merry laugh of her own; and as she laughed, her plump bosom rose and fell seductively. True it had suckled a round half-dozen little Jardrets for the country's service, but for all that it made the two Non-coms' mouths water; for in an outlying post on the Tunisian frontier the beauteous sex was chiefly conspicuous by its adsence.

"Yes! Lieutenant?"

"The fourth in a week, Quartermaster! that's

1. This is military slang for *maréchal-des-logis chef* (Cavalry, or Artillery) corresponding to our rank of sergeant major.

the way you perform your duties. The fourth hen, Sir! the fourth, by God! "

" Hen, Sir! what hen? " stammered the other, taken aback.

" Disappeared, I tell you! stolen, looted by the skulking Zouaves. "

"I can scarcely believe it, "returned the Quartermaster. " The Spahis on guard have strict orders to watch all Zouaves who come inside the Fort. And besides, ever since the Zouaves have replaced the linesmen Company, the fowls are never allowed out of the court-yard. "

" Well then! it's the Bedawins they allow to sleep in the cellars. I shall go and ask the Captain to make a clean sweep of the lot; else I give up the mess, and it may go to the devil for me! "

A thin, fine, cold, penetrating, persistent rain was beginning to fall. All very well to be in Africa, in the valley of the Ouled-Mellegue, five and twenly miles south of the Kef; for all that in February, when the wind comes from the North-West bringing this confounded rain with it, it is not exactly warm. And for the past fortnight it had been raining and blowing every night! so the empty cellars of the unfinished *bordj* filled up

rapidly as night fell. There negroes, Biskris, Mozabites took refuge, in fact all the *Berranis*, all the *Khrames*, that as plasterers, ass-drivers, hauliers, day-labourers, hodmen, were in the Contractor's pay at ten sous a day.

A score or so of poor devils, very quiet and well behaved and speaking in subdued tones, were seated warming their toes round little fires of broken planks, shavings and chips of wood, that burned here and there in different cellars and gave out tiny, feeble flickers of flame. They were regular poor men's fires, humble, beggarly, lurking affairs, ashamed and afraid to show a proper blaze.

The fellows were tolerated, and that was all. At first they had slept outside, in the neighbouring *bush* or sometimes under shelter of the ramparts, wrapped in their ragged burnouses; but when the North West came on to blow, bringing that sort of fine penetrating rain with it that soaks a man to the bone in half an hour, they used to slip in stealthily every evening and shelter in the substructures of the Fort. First two, then three, presently ten, and soon the whole clan of them.

They gave no trouble, not they! Coming in noiselessly, an hour after the fowls had gone to roost,

they would be cooking their scrap of *frechteack* in battered pots, before stretching their limbs for the night round the hot embers. At peep of day they would be up and away, waiting in the work-sheds for their masters the masons to rise.

Poor creatures! A man *must* find somewhere to sleep. The starry vault of heaven sounds well, and is said to give golden dreams, — but only in dry weather; and with ten sous a day you can't aspire to a room at the hotel! Then outside the walls of the Fort, except for the hovels of the *mercantis* and the masons' huts, there was nothing but the *bush* or the open desert. So their presence was winked at; indeed the Captain went so far as to say, " they helped to dry the foundations. " *But* from the instant the ragamuffins began to repay our hospitality by stealing our hens, oh, no!.... The fourth in a week, great God! We were as angry as Lieutenant Fortescu himself, and made a dash for the cellars.

" Up and out, you dirty horde of savages! "

The unfortunates could see by our faces we meant business. They turned pale and sprang to their feet without a word, a dismal silence greeting our furious inrush.

" Where is the thief? — heaven and earth! where is the thief who's been stealing the Captain's hens? "

Panic-stricken, they looked at each other. Then, after the first moment of stupefaction, there rose a chorus of indignant denial and protestations of innocence. They all swore with hand on heart, by the head of the Prophet and the beard of their fathers, they were incapable of so foul an outrage.

We maintained an attitude of cool, ironical incredulity. With a kick we sent the crazy pots and pans flying, together with the evening pittance that was simmering in them over the fire. Sauces unknown to cookery sputtered in the embers, blackened fragments, — bits of sheep's head and bullock's neck, rolled in the ashes; but of hen, roast or boiled, not a vestige! Every corner was routed out, the dingy little heaps of clothes and scraps of rotten matting turned over with the foot; but never a trace of what we sought! Finally, to satisfy our conscience and to stop anyone saying we had been wanting in zeal, the wretched little fires were swept clean away, and cooking utensils and remains of food, roasted onions and charred firewood sent skimming to right and left; and

Quartermaster Pechiné retired to report the result of his mission.

" Not a vestige of a hen! Sir! "

" By the Lord! now did you suppose they were going to offer you my hen on a dish? But they've eaten it, the dogs! They've devoured it, never fear, the greedy pigs! Pitch'em out; and never let me see the brutes again! "

II

So they pitche d' em out accordingly; and it didn't take long either, I can tell you! The rain was coming down harder than ever; and the wind blew in fierce gusts. making their wet clothes stick to their poor shivering bodies. They disappeared, God knows where to, taking their drenched belongings with them. They made a melancholy, silent company, bearing hungry bellies and sick hearts without a murmur, bending low beneath the lash of a hard fate.

When the last was gone, the Quartermaster threw the light of his lantern into every corner. He was just climbing the stairway again, when he caught a groan. He instituted a fresh search and

directing the gleam into a dark recess, suddenly flashed it on a group of two.

"Holloa! who's there?"

In the very darkest corner, under the staircase of the cellar, crouched an old negro shaking with fever or cold, while seated by his side, supporting the old man's head on his knees, was a second negro, the latter a young, strong man, who was endeavouring to restore some warmth to the aged body. With this view he had stripped himself of his *burnouse* and *gandourah* [1], and stark naked and shivering himself, was bending over his companion and clasping him in his arms. But the old fellow's teeth were chattering like castanets, and you could see, — and a right pitiful sight it made, — his white woolly beard that curled closely under his chin, going up and down, up and down, in rapid jerks, while his eyes were fixed in a stupid unwavering stare on the flame of the lantern.

The younger man, clinging tight to the old, and encircling him with his arms, tried to hide him, as one might a child, with his own body, at the

1. A large robe covering the limbs down to the ancles.

same time making himself as small as possible, even yet hoping to escape notice.

" What! more of the savages! " shouted the Quartermaster. " Why! I declare there are two more of them there! Is there *no* way to be rid of the vermin? Out with you both, by the Lord! out with you! "

He tried to lash himself into a passion; but at heart he was not a bad sort, and deep down somewhere he felt his heart swell at the idea of turning out an old man dying of fever into the rainy night.

Then the younger man rose, and with humble, fawning, supplicating tones :

" Sidi, I beseech you, let us stay. He is my father. Look how the fever burns him! I have brought him from Souk-Arras to-day; now he can go no further. Do not turn us out, Sidi! [1] we have done no harm. Had there been a *douar* near here, we would have made our way to the *douar*, — I would have carried him there on my shoulders; but there is none. Leave us alone for one night, in our little dark corner. We will not make any noise, we

1. "Sidi" is the popular transcription of the classical *Sayyidi*, my lord, or sir, and much used by the Arabs of Northern Africa.

will not budge a foot, and we will be off your hands before daylight to-morrow. "

The Quartermaster turned his back, and climbed the staircase once again.

" All gone? " asked the Lieutenant.

" Yes, Sir !.....all except an old negro, who cannot walk. "

" An old man! Then he is a bigger scoundrel than the rest, that's all! No doubt *he* stole my hens. "

" I think not, Sir! He is sick, and but just arrived from Souk-Arras. "

" Eh? — then what's all this story about his not being able to walk? He comes from Souk-Arras, you say? Well then! he's a thief the Kroumirs have sent; and he's sick with indigestion from gobbling up my hen too fast, the greedy glutton! Dog! — You're to turn him out, I say; and mark me! quick's the word. "

The Quartermaster went down once more; and ashamed at heart of the orders he had to execute, and still hesitating about carrying them into effect, said to the young negro :

" Come, my man! be off with you. Take your father away. The Captain won't allow anybody to stay here. "

With this he left him, without insisting further and without looking back, feeling sure the negro would not follow him, avoided Lieutenant Fortescu and ran to the Canteen, where his dinner was getting cold.

But Fortescu, wrapped in his hooded greatcoat and puffing fiercely at his pipe, stood at the main-gate of the *Bordj*. Presently seeing no signs of the old fellow, whom he meant to give a piece of his mind to as he went out, and getting tired of waiting, he went down himself into the cellars, and ended by discovering the two men. He began to swear furiously,

" Sidi! he is my father, " the young man said once more. " You too, perhaps you have a father who is old and feeble. In *your* father's name, let mine stay here a few hours. Have pity on him, Sidi! The Prophet says : " Have compassion on thy father and on thy mother, when they are waxen feeble, even as they had compassion on thee when thou wast a young child. " Look! he shudders like the skirt of a burnouse shaken by the wind. "

" Out with you! out with you! " shouted Fortescu, now furiously angry; " do you think my fa-

ther is a starveling vagabond like yours? Be off, both of you; or I will see what a sound thrashing with sword scabbards will do to get rid of you! "

And he pushed the old man with his boot, who gathered together all the strength he could muster to get up and obey.

" Sidi! do not strike him; by your head, I say, do not strike him, " the son cried, with blazing eyes and trembling lips. His fists were clenched, and he glared threateningly at the Officer.

The ruddy glare of the lantern brought out purple tones on the bronze of his skin. A tall, muscular, wild figure, he came near intimidating Fortescu, who felt by no means eager to come to grips in a cellar with the dusky giant. So, stepping back to one of the air-holes that opened near the guard-room, he called :

" Quarter-guard, here, I say! "

Then, as soon as five or six Spahis were round the young negro, he gave him three or four slashing blows on the naked back with his cane.

Passion makes even the bravest of us do cowardly acts sometimes.

Pointing to the old man, — and you could hear the very death-rattle in the old fellow's throat :

" Pitch me that garbage out of doors, " he said, and proceeded to relight his pipe.

The son's eyes were blood-shot with fury ; but he stooped down without a word, lifted his father in his arms, wrapped him up carefully, and putting him on his shoulders, like Æneas with the old Anchises, sallied out, naked as he was, from the *Bordj*, spitting behind him as he left the gate.

The rain was coming down heavier than ever. Little Madame Jardret, with the *Marchef's* burnouse thrown over her shouldres, came running up, laughing to see the tall negro, naked as Adam, carrying an old man perched so comically on his back, while the *Marchef* behind her, taking unfair advantage of the rights the loan of his burnouse gave him and profiting by the darkness, was tickling her in likely places, and making her give little half stifled screams. But meantime, yonder, out on the plain, a staggering figure, lashed by wind and battered by the rain, was gradually disappearing in the darkness.

III

Some three weeks later, Lieutenant Fortescu, pipe in mouth and cane in hand, was peacefully promenading up and down, like any respectable citizen, between the bushes of juniper and myrtle that surrounded the *bordj* of El-Meridj. The sky was indigo and the sun shining brilliantly, while the swallows were arriving in their thousands. For the first time since the beginning of the year he had got out his suit of white duck and was wearing a big palmleaf hat, a present from a neighbouring Caïd, Hamda-bel-Hassen. All the while as he smoked his faithful pipe, he kept hitting out angrily with his cane at the young shoots of broom, like a *Chaouch* rapping Turks' heads.

Yet he had made an excellent breakfast, enjoyed his coffee, and his *pousse-café* taken in due order his beer, a white-wash, a second white-wash, then beer again. So what the deuce was he dissatisfied about?

Had another hen missed roll-call? Alas, yes! — and not one, or two, or three, but ten! Soon

the defaulters were reckoned by dozens. The cock himself, that noble Cochin-China, so proud and haughty and so vigorous, that Hercules of the poultry-yard, had vanished. Yet the cellars of the *Bordj* sheltered no more *Chaouias* and no more negroes. In fact Fortescu, by recognizing the mutilated remains of the file-leader and husband of his flock simmering along with boiled potatoes in a camp-kettle in the lines of No. 4 Company of the Second, had just had convincing proof it was the Zouaves, and the Zouaves only, who devastated his poultry-yard.

But this was not what troubled him, and made him slash away the green boughs of the myrtles, Venus' own tree; for these thefts would in the nature of things very soon end. The Company of Zouaves was going back to Constantine. A few days more and they would be rid of these troublesome neighbours.

And this was precisely the thing that annoyed Fortescu so. During the two years the works on the Fort lasted, the *Smala* of Spahis not being at first sufficient to protect the work-people, the authorities had in the first instance sent a battalion. But presently the battalion was reduced to

two Companies, and later on to one. Now they were withdrawing this as entirely unnecessary. The country was pacified, the frontier tribes brought to their knees, — no more sentries murdered, no more colonists' heads cut off, a dead calm everywhere! A man could go from Tebessa to El-Meridj, from El-Meridj to Souk-Arras, from Souk-Arras to the Tarf, and from there to La Calle, calmy swinging his stick and smoking cigarettes, as he might stroll from the Bastille to the Madeleine, — with only this much difference that instead of paying for his refreshment on the way at an exorbitant price, and giving a tip to the waiter into the bargain. you were entertained for nothing at every halting place on the road by the silly Arabs, without feeling in any way bound to say so much as " thank you! " to them on leaving. And this state of things had lasted now for months and months! And it might very well go on lasting for months and months more, or even years. Well and good! well and good! But then — God in heaven! what about a man's promotion!

Quite true for six months past the terrible fevers of El-Meridj had been at work on the Captain, leaving nothing but the bare skin on his bones.

If he were to *break his pipe*, it would make a vacancy. But when was he going to tuck in his toes? One sees men like that, — weakly, suffering creatures, with one leg in the grave, men you would think had only one other breath to draw in this world, and lo! they see the strongest into the Church-yard.

Not that he had any grudge against that most excellent fellow, Captain Fleury, individually. Far from it; he was devoted to him, and would have had his own skin cut into ribbons to save him in a charge. But deuce and all! as there was nothing whatever in the pot in the whole blessed country in the way of fighting, one couldn't help asking if some of the seniors didn't mean presently to attend a funeral parade.

Each for himself, — that's the way, eh? Anything to do? No! good God! nothing! nothing at all! The miserable Bedawin are got so tame they can be sheared like sheep. Pack of fools! if only they would just kick up a dust now and then! But all they want is to live in peace and quietness. Peace and quietness! Phaugh!

What cursed luck! Twenty years' service, and only a Senior Lieutenant! He had made interest to

secure a frontier command, counting on raids and fighting and hard knocks, — and he was putting on flesh! When was this blessed Government, — a Government of attorneys and cheesemongers, going to make up its mind to come down on somebody or something? Why! if only the Emperor were there still, the thing would have been done ages ago. How do you suppose Officers are ever to become Republican, if the Republican Government cuts off every chance of promotion! Might just as well stay at home and be a tallow-chandler. A man would make more, selling candles. Service gone to the dogs in these parts! Not ten months ago you couldn't have taken ten steps outside the *Bordj* without a *plum-stone* at your head, — and here he was more than two hundred yards away. A man is bound to reckon on fever and dysentery, when there's not the very faintest vestige of a bullet flying anywhere!

As if some good-natured Fairy had overheard Fortescu's reflections and determined to satisfy his wishes in this particular at any rate, there was a sudden explosion and a ball whizzed hissing past his ear, so close he could feel the wind of it.

He wheeled round with a quickness and nim-

bleness hardly to have been expected of so *stout* a soldier.

" Stupid idiot! awkward fool! " he screamed. " It's that damned *Marchef* shooting hares! Hi! you there! take care where you're shooting to, confound you! "

But at that moment a second shot, that made a hole right through his favourite palm-leaf hat, showed him conclusively that the sportsman, whoever he was, *was* taking the *greatest* care where he was shooting to, and that he was *not* shooting at a hare; and pale with anger and astonishment, he perceived through the blue smoke that curled gracefully from a thicket of tamarinds, a fluttering white burnouse.

" To horse! to horse! "

And still panting with his exertions, he showed the Captain the hole in his hat.

" Are they in force? " asked the latter, springing out of bed, all shaking with fever as he was.

" I had no time to count them, Sir! they are in ambush in the *bush* ; but they fired several shots. "

" I heard two. I thought it was that fool of a *Marchef* out shooting. "

But there was the *Marchef* coming up at the double from the Canteen, where he had been just in the act of sweetening his sixth tumbler in the course of his famous anecdote of the *Amorous Maiden*, that alway made little Madame Jardret ill with laughing.

"A platoon, to horse!" was the order. And within five minutes the platoon under the command of Fortescu was leaving the Fort at a round trot.

The covert was thoroughly beaten, and every thicket searched. The men went down into the bed of the Wad-Horhirh between the deep banks. But not a thing could they find except some herd-boys and two or three *Chaouias* sitting quietly discussing the news of the day.

The enemy had vanished.

A child who had scudded away at the approach of the Spahis was quickly overtaken and brought back. On being threatened that they would cut her head off incontinently, if she did not tell the truth and the whole truth, she admitted in fear and trembling having seen a tall negro slip through the *bush* and make off at a run towards the *douar* of the Caïd of the Ouled-Ali, Hamda-bel-Hassen,

from the further side of the Oued-Hohrirh, at the foot of the mountain.

IV

The Caïd Hamda-bel-Hassen had anything but a good record in the books of the *Bureau arabe*. In former times he had borne a share in every one of the risings of the Nememchas; and though he had made formal submission during the recent frontier troubles and had duly furnished his *goum*, it was obvious to all he did so against the grain.

Nevertheless since the establishment of the perpetual camp of El-Meridj and since the Fort of the same name had been built, a standing menace, on the very edge of his territory, he had lived peaceably with his neighbours, as a wise man should, dividing his interest between his wives and his *slouguis* (hounds). Twice every year he would present himself at Tebessa with his Secretary and Treasurer-in-Chief to pay his assessment, and was always accompanied by a mule carrying a full load of Tunisian silks, braided *djebiras*, ostrich eggs, and native arms forged in the *ksours*. The presents were of no great value,

but they served to keep up a friendly feeling, and were such as the Officials of the Bureau could accept without compromising their characters.

The sudden irruption of the red troopers therefore surprised him beyond measure. However he received them with smiles of welcome, coming forward to meet them escorted by the *kebirs* (great men) of his *douar* :

" Welcome, thrice welcome ! Lo ! you are sent of heaven ! " he cried. " Greeting be on your heads, and happiness ! — Can I believe my eyes ? Yes ! joy of joys ; it is, it is he, — my friend, the brave and noble lieutenant Fortescu, lord of the sword ! How goes it ? how goes it with you and yours, my brother ? "

" Cut short your compliments, " Fortescu replied roughly, being a man who professed the profoundest scorn for mere foolish civility, a thing only fit for children, whether at home or abroad. " We know you, my noble lord, — who you are and what you are. This very morning men of your tribe have fired on Officers of the *Bordj*. "

" Men of my Tribe ! " exclaimed Hamda-bel-Hassen. Is it possible ? I am amazed at what you tell me. You have been misinformed, my son. "

"Misinformed, by God! Why! two balls whistled by my own ears, and my hat was shot clean through!"

"Since you say so, it is so; for nought but the truth can come forth from your lips. Tell me then the name of the wretches; and may Allah empty my saddle and give my mare a Jew for master, if they have not sharp justice and short shrift."

"You mock me, Caïd. How should I know your savages one from another? But there was a negro with them."

"A negro! There are no negroes at the *douar* but my servant Salem. Salem, come hither."

A tall negro, young and strong, came out of the tent, laughing and wondering, showing his dazzlingly white teeth.

"That's the man!" exclaimed Fortescu; "I know him. I turned him out of the *bordj* three weeks ago. He stole our hens."

"What you tell me, dearest friend of my heart, astounds me," returned the Caïd. This man cannot have stolen your hens. He came to us from Souk-Arras, at the last gasp from weariness and hunger, carrying on his back his father's body, — the aged Bou-Beker, who died of fever that

rainy night; and we made him welcome among us. "

" No doubt at all, now! It's our man. Spahis, seize the scoundrel. "

" Hold your hands, my children. You are Mussulmans; do not do an unjust deed. May Allah desert me in my utmost need, if Salem has left the *douar* this day! "

In face of this oath, the Spahis hesitated.

" Flat mutiny! " screamed Fortescu. " Now look here, Caïd Hamda-bel-Hassen! I am going to surround your *douar*, and drive you every one to the Fort. The order hangs on your answer. Give up the fellow with a good grace; if not, why! I take him by force, and then — look out for broken heads. If he is innocent, he shall be sent back again. "

When he heard these words, the negro Salem seized the hem of his master's burnouse and throwing himself at his knees, cried :

" Caïd, my good lord and master, do not give me up! I shelter my head under the skirt of your burnouse. I am your slave and your guest. Do not give me up; they will never send me back again. "

Some way off the inhabitants of the *douar* were

looking on in sullen silence. But on the threshold of the tents, the women were listening to what passed, and more fiery than the men, more excitable and also more keenly alive to injustice and the breach of plighted faith, they cried :

" Do not give him up, Caïd. He is the guest of the Tribe. By the head of the Prophet and the oath of Ebrahim (Abraham) do not let him go. You know, you know it was not he that fired at the French officer, but his brother El Kenine (the Rabbit), who has taken to the mountains by now. The Roumi drove out his dying father; he but tried to avenge the cruelty. It is well done ! "

And all the men re-echoed :

" It is well done ! "

The Lieutenant gave the word to draw swords.

Twenty-four naked blades flashed in the red rays of the setting sun, — and the sight put the finishing touch to the women's fury.

" Out on the accursed dogs ! " they yelled, " dogs and children of dogs ! Ho ! men, our husbands and our sons, what! have you never a ball in your pouches ? "

But the Caïd, raising his arm and turning to the

shouting women, said in a stern voice of command :

" Peace, women! your tongues are like the tail of the black scorpion; when they wound, they kill. Silence! the men know what they have to do. "

Then, addressing the Officer :

" Listen! what is written is written; but your act is an act of violence. I have but to wave my hand and the powder would speak. But I am the friend of the Frenchmen, and I would fain live without dispute between us. Take the man; I do not give him up to you, for he is my guest; but I trust him to you. To-morrow, at mid-day, I shall come to your *Bordj* to claim him back; between now and then you will have had time to reflect... ...Women, hold your peace! The Officer told us : If he is innocent, we will give him back. I have his word. My own head be accursed for ever, if one hair of his shall suffer. "

V

It was late at night when they got back to the *Bordj*, and the Captain turned out on purpose to

put the prisoner to a provisional and summary examination.

This latter persisted in his denials. Was it he that had fired on the Lieutenant? Was it his brother El Kenine? *Had* he a brother named El Kenine at all? It was never discovered. But after all what did it matter? His brother or himself, — it came to the same thing. The essential point was to punish the insolence of that Hamda-bel-Hassen, and you could hardly find a better opportunity. To remove any last scruples that might have troubled the conscience of the judges, two or three Spahis were ready to declare they thought they recognized the darkey again as having seen him prowling by night round the bastions. But then all negroes are alike from the moment when you can no longer make out the difference between a white thread and a black.

With the limbs of a Hercules, intrepid, strong and active, the man was only the more dangerous for these qualities. Who knows he was not the thief who stole the horse Quartermaster-Sergeant Othman-ben-Khalifa had had *lifted* one night close to his tent right in the very middle of the *smala*?" Why of course it must be him!" He was thrown into

the *silos* meanwhile, until he could be conveyed to the Bureau Arabe at Tebessa to-morrow morning.

But on second thoughts *why* bring him before the Bureau at all?

A long discussion took place, as the result of which two Zouaves were put on sentry-duty behind each bastion, outside the *Bordj*, with strict orders as to their duty.

The Corporal, Ali-bel-Kassen, on guard-duty that night, enjoyed a private interview with his Lieutenant. Then a strange thing happened; the man, on duty as he was and as a rule a pattern of vigilance, to-night of all nights fell so dead asleep that he clean forgot to push to the bolt of the trap-door closing the *silo*.

The said *silo* was a square hole ten feet or so deep, and served as the negro's prison. It was excavated in the South-East bastion, facing the frontier, and was lined with masonry. It was entered by means of a ladder, which was drawn up as soon as the prisoner had descended. But an active man can dispense with ladders; and accordingly, towards three o'clock in the morning, a great black shadow that seemed to issue from underground, crept along the walls.

" Glory be to God All-Merciful ! "

The Spahis on guard, wrapped in their burnouses were snoring behind their horses. The phantom glided between them and their horses' tails in the gloom of the shed, patting the suddenly awakened animals and saying, " Steady there! steady, my beauty ! " as a watchful man might do on stable-duty; then directly he was hidden by the wooden bulkhead forming one side of the shed, near the Canteen, he bent himself double in the angle where the walls met, and by the help of hands, knees and feet, with the agility of a panther, in ten seconds reached the summit of the wall.

For an instant his naked body was visible astride the top, looking for all the world like an antique Florentine bronze. He scanned with longing eyes the dark *bush* that blotched the stony soil below him. Quite near, not five hundred yards away at farthest stretched the grey Tunisian plain, from which rose, like some Giant's table, the square rock of Galash, and once there he could defy the accursed Christians.

Five minutes' running, some leaping through the broom and tall grass, and then, — the frontier and freedom !

It may be he was seized by the strange spasm they call a presentiment, the horrid feeling that haunts men threatened by disaster; at any rate he hesitated, and turning his head so as to look back into the great silent courtyard of the Fort, he seemed to be debating if it were not better after all to come down again, go back to his *silos*, and submit to the good pleasure of the military tribunal.

But suddenly, just below him, the Canteen-woman's cock, awakened by the scraping and scratching on the wall, made the whole Fort resound with the shrill echoes of his morning crow. The hens clucked, the whole poultry-yard awoke, and the negro disappeared down the other side of the wall.

He opened his arms wide, leapt forward and fell lightly in the ditch, with legs bent under him like an accomplished gymnast, and arms in front. Then he cleared the counterscarp with one bound, and away towards the broom.

"Glory be to God All-Merciful!" he said, for the second time.

His escape seemed secure.

But at that moment he caught the ominous,

familiar sound of a musket being cocked, and made a spring to one side.

" Crack! crack! "

He leapt, his body bent double, into the darkest covert.

A flash clove the darkness, a peal of thunder, then silence.

Then a second flash and a second explosion. The sound of a man's body striking the ground... a long choking moan... then nothing. And two triumphant, but rather shaky, voices shouted :

" Hurra! he's got his physic. "

" Well shot indeed! "

Then two Zouaves, with bayonets fixed, rushed up.

" Hilloa! " they said, " why! it's a Negro! "

VI

When the Caïd Hamda-bel-Hassen arrived towards eight o'clock, he was shown the corpse. It lay in the same spot where the man had fallen, face downwards, shot from behind like a runaway.

There were two hits, one in the shoulder, one in the loins.

The Caïd bent his head in silence. Indeed there was nothing to be said. It is the law of War : an attempt at escape is always punished with a bullet.

He went home without lodging any complaint. The women of the *douar* received him with hooting, and from Saturday to Friday his youngest wife refused him her favours. But he swore before them all, that to pay for his servant's head he would throw them ten Roumis' heads.

The country till then comparatively peaceable, grew disturbed, full of "excursions and alarums." Volcanoes of evil passions broke into eruption on every side. The sleeping plains awoke, the mountains and ravines shuddered.

The Caïd Hamda-bel-Hassen kept his word. He took the ten heads, one after the other, plucking them from Christian shoulders like flowers from the stalk, to pacify the angry women of the Ouled-Ali. He had taken sanctuary amid the precipitous rocks of the Djebel ; but every time he came down into the plain, he left his mark there, — and his mark was a great splotch of blood.

The squadron of Spahis and Company of Zouaves became as of old insufficient, and were rein-

forced by troops from Souk-Arras and from Tebessa.

The banks of the Oued-Horhirh and the Oued-Mellegue were red with carnage. Two other Tribes had joined that of Hamda-bel-Hassen, the whole force amounting to 800 horses and some 1200 muskets. It took several weeks to get the upper hand again. Then the noble sport of man-hunting began. Tracked like beasts of prey, they had to surrender at discretion. No quarter was given; such were the orders. Once taken, arms or no arms, they were slaughtered like dogs. They *burned* the clump of mountain country where Hamda-bel-Hassen still held out. Vines, crops, olives, fig-trees, all were soon in ashes.

The ancient forests of cork-oaks blazed like tinder. The "insurgents" would *not* give in. Hacked and slashed, undermined and blown sky-high, they let fly their last cartridge. Cartridges finished, they fought hand-to-hand with their *flissas*. Blades broken, they bit, — till our men took to the butt and smashed their jaws.

Not having a Bazaine, they had no Metz... but they had their Sedan. And as they possessed neither tribunes, nor lawyers, nor professional

politicians, to sow discord and corruption among them, the last survivors marched to their death shoulder to shoulder.

Surrounded in a rocky hollow to the number of two or three hundred, tattered and half naked, worn out with utter weariness, dying of hunger and thirst, they were shot down by two thousand assailants. They fell to the last man. Once more civilization gave a good account of her savage enemies.

Fortescu, in all this rumpus, won his Captain's badge. He had shown himself a brave man, and no one could say he had not fairly won it.

He took up his quarters once more at the *Bordj*, where he was second in command; and smoking his old short pipe, dressed in his suit of white duck and his brand-new képi of sky-blue, he cast many a look from the high ground on which the ramparts of El-Meridj rise proudly dominating the bare country-side and the still smoking forests, and smiling to himself like a man proud of his work, would say :

" And all that for a stolen hen! However *we* have nothing to reproach ourselves with. No one can say *we* began it. "

" No! Captain, " answered Sub-Lieutenant Pechiné, calling to mind the nickname of the negro Salem (El Kenine), " it was the rabbit did it! '

VI

A LIVING DEATH'S-HEAD

Musk hashish and blood.

VI

A LIVING DEATH'S-HEAD

I

TO MY FRIEND LÉON CLADEL [1]

I do not approve of persons who take the execution of Justice into their own hands; nor do I recognize any more right as belonging to an injured husband to kill his wife's lover or his guilty wife herself than I do for a man who has just had his watch stolen to cut the pick-pocket's throat.

The offence is not one deserving of the supreme penalty of death, and the right to inflict it which the wronged husband arrogates to himself, and which every jury endorses, is a mere survival of Greek, Roman and Jewish customs; for our own

1. A celebrated French novelist of the *Naturaliste* School. — One evening, at Sèvres, seated at the fireside of the famous author of *L'Homme de la Croix aux Bœufs*, one foot on the fender, I told him the tale. He was so greatly struck by it as to make me promise on the spot to write it down; and on this account I dedicate it to him.

ancestors, the Franks, were much more accommodating, being satisfied with making the lover pay a fine of a hundred pence! In England a husband who kills his unfaithful wife or her lover is hung, just like any other murderer.

Our neighbours across the Channel have here and there good points about them we should do well to imitate, such for instance as punctuality, and the *cat o'nine tails*[1].

Still when Justice makes herself the tacit accomplice of the murderer, and actually encourages

1. "Whip having nine thongs of leather tipped each with a little ball of lead, used in the English prisons for the correction of *garrotters* and burglars. The tender sensibility of the philanthropists was shocked, and they gave utterance to loud protests : but as a matter of fact since the introduction of this " barbarous " punishment, crimes of violence and night assaults have decreased 80 per cent in London." — It is quite agreable to find in Hector France an exponent of this healthy Doctrine. We hate cruelty, a remnant of our animal ancestry, the link that yet binds us strongly to the untamed brute. But *similia similibus*, an eye for an eye, *teeth* for a tooth, we believe is the only practice that will turn *rôdeurs de barrières* and foul-minded *souteneurs*, whether of Paris or London, from fattening on the sale of women's bodies, and attacking drunken, or defenceless old men. Vide *Étude sur la flagellation à travers les Ages aux Points de vue Médical, Historique et Conjugal* (Paris, 1899). for further details concerning the efficacy and " beauty" of corporal punishment.

resort, as we have only too often seen, to the use of vitriol and the revolver, she thereby authorizes the victim to take the law into his own hands, or the family to avenge their relative's death.

I should be very sorry to see the habits of the Corsican " bush " introduced in France; but if my wife were murdered, or my father, or my mother, or my son, and the murderer were just quietly sent home again safe and sound under the pretext that he had made an unfortunate mistake, I should not hesitate an instant to make another *unfortunate mistake* and put a bullet through his head.

Readers must excuse my little preamble. I was anxious to express my opinion on the remarkable verdict in a late trial, in which the Jury by acquitting a wife, a rather impetuous and very short-sighted lady, would seem desirous of setting up Lynch law in France. Personally, I should have no objection; but they must confer on us at the same time the other privileges of American *liberty*.

And now I come to my story, — a story of an injured husband who followed so many good examples, and took the law into his own hands.

*
* *

It was the third time Ahmed-ben-Abderahman had played the part of injured husband. True he had never been thrashed into the bargain, but this was a small consolation under the circumstances.

As a matter of fact his anger had been extreme, as he sufficiently proved by his acts. When his first wife went astray, he sliced her head neatly off with a keen knife, following the time-honoured custom of Mussulman husbands in such cases. This brought him into serious trouble, from which he only escaped with the utmost difficulty, mainly owing to the influence of General Desveaux.

The second time, he copied the Moor of Venice and smothered the frail offender, having first of all broken the gay Lothario's arm with a musket bullet. The latter was a young Official of the Bureau Arabe, and got off without further inconvenience. On this occasion however, as it was a second offense, Abderahman was condemned to several years' transportation over seas by a Jury who had every one of them suffered in the same way as he had, but failed to consider the cirum-

stance that the repetition of the crime was after all a consequence of the repetition of the wrong [1].

1. Except in very rare cases, adultery has always been regarded as a grave offence and punished condignly. Dr Ed. Dupouy (*Médecine et Mœurs de l'ancienne Rome,* Paris 1892) gives an instance from Plautus, the Roman Comedian, where the delightful operation of castration was performed upon the male offender.

Quin jamdudum gestit moecho abdomen adimere,
Ut faciam quasi puero in colla pendeant crepundia.

Nowadays a little harmless shooting, or a fine in the Divorce Court, appears to soothe the civilised husband's wrath; but we know of the case of a celebrated translator of an Arabic Story-book, who was said to be impotent, and yet was "blessed" with a wife of a most ardent nature, whom he surprised one twilight on a sofa with a lover. To avoid a scandal he crossed the room without affecting to see anything, but rumour hath it that he afterwards gave her a severe private castigation. The Germans, according to the Ethnographer, Letourneau, used to make the guilty woman walk naked through the village. In some of the Celtic tribes the husband used to test the legitimacy of his newborn child by letting him float on a river upon a shield: If the baby was drowned, the signification drawn was that the woman had broken the conjugal part, and that she ought to be put to death. As late as the Middle Ages, the adulterous woman was shut up in a convent for the rest of her life; and in case of flagrant crime, the husband might put her to death, claiming, too, if necessary, his son's assistance. Such was the canon law; the makers of the code, it would appear, did not even dream of punishing adultery on the part of the husband. And still we hear of the woman's emancipation being effected by Christianity!

Returning home from Cayenne, aged and battered, but in no way reformed or penitent, he took a new wife, the old ones having meantime grown to look worn out and ugly.

* * *

I had known Sidi-ben-Abderahman well when he was Caïd of Ouargla and more than once I had found an opportunity of doing him some small services. He still remembered these facts when he met me at Constantine after his misfortunes. He was then living in a handsome house built in the Moorish style near the great Mosque, the *Djema el Kebir*; and was often good enough to invite me to drink coffee and eat *couscous* with him. Amiable, courteous and liberal, he allowed no trace to appear externally of chagrin or ill-will. An Arab gentleman of high birth, a scion of the powerful family of the *Ouled Khelif*, he still possessed a comparatively large fortune and maintained at his own cost, like the Roman Patricians, a score of poor relations belonging to his Tribe. In this way he brought up a young camel-boy of the *Souf*, in whom he had noted a quick intelligence. He had him instructed

in the learning of the *Talebs* [1] and eventually admitted as an Assessor in the Chamber of the *Amins* (Court of Arbitration). The young man lived in his patron's house, who employed him as Steward of the household and Secretary, and had made a friend and companion of him. No need to say more to make you understand his opportunities and foresee the result that followed.

I ought to add as an extenuating circumstance that Ahmed-ben-Abderahman was getting on for sixty, — a good age for a Bedouin who has spent five years of his life at Cayenne, and like the old Sheikh in the Ballad, has

"Grey-headed grown in camp and field."

1. The word "talib" comes from the Arabic root talaba meaning "to search, or enquire after" and is employed generally to signify an educated man, a *lettré*. The studies of *the talibs* or more correctly the *tolâb* are confined to Theological dogma, Grammar, Jurisprudence, a dash of Astronomy, and the History of the Arabs. Nothing else is considered worthy of the scholar's attention, unless it be the commerce of the sexes, about which some capital works exist.

For this reason as Daumas long ago noted (*Mœurs et coutumes de l'Algérie*) the most learned are inconceivably ignorant of the Arts and Sciences of other peoples. They study only speculative and conjectural matters and utterly neglect those exact and positive *connaissances* which alone open up the path of progress to mankind.

However grey hairs and wisdom by no means invariably go together, and like many another, the former Caïd of Ouargla only got more unreasonable as his beard whitened. The flaunts he had received so far had failed to disillusion him, and he married again, — married the divine Hadjira.

I say *divine* advisedly, and you would have said the same, had you seen her. She was the very prettiest little Moorish beauty imaginable, and except for her father, her brothers, her husband, her lover and myself, no profane masculine eye had ever polluted her sweet face. The moment I set eyes on her, I understood the worthy Abderahman's infatuation.

Yes! he loved her madly; and the terrible vengeance he took on her when, within a few weeks of the marriage-night, he discovered he had been deceived again, was a mortal grief to the old man.

Curiously enough I was the man who, without knowing it at the time, suggested the nature of the punishment to be inflicted on *Amin Al-Askoub* But indeed the young Magistrate was an atrocious scamp, as much to blame as Hadjira, or more, for she was only a simple-minded child after all; and

I salved my conscience with the phrase, "Evil begets suffering, and evil-living evil dying." But really no remorse ever troubled my sleep, which is they say the best possible proof of a conscience void of offence.

To clasp a man by the hand, — and betray him; to kiss his cheek like Judas, saying, "Friend, I salute you," — and run to sell him; to receive hospitality, — and steal away one's host's bride; to eat his bread, — and rob him of his honour; to shelter beneath his roof, — and pollute his bed! — could anything be more currish than this?

The Roman soldier guilty of adultery with his host's wife was drawn and quartered; what penalty for the wretch who dishonours the wife of his patron and benefactor?

One day Ahmed happened to say to me: "There should be available some form of punishment worse than death! for death, when it strikes unexpectedly is no punishment at all. Its approach is never felt, and as often as not there is no pain."

"You are right. The Ancients were more logical than ourselves; they invented a variety of death penalties to correspond to various crimes.

Our civilization makes the penalty always one and the same, and by doing so is both illogical and unjust, inflicting the same commonplace death on the professional murderer and the unfortunate who kills another by accident, on the man who in a moment of passion slays an enemy and the ruffian who cuts his father's and mother's throats, poisons his wife, ravishes his own daughter and drowns his children."

The old Caïd assented with a shrug.

"You want refined punishments;" I went on, smiling, "Very well! you should travel in the Far East, or read the books describing the pains and penalties inflicted among the Chinese, Japanese and Mongolians."

"I can only read my Koran" returned the Caïd modestly, "but if you will speak, I will listen and learn."

"I am going to describe the way they punish traitors among the Tonquinese, to pass away a half hour pleasantly."

"I am all attention, my son!"

"Well! they take the man, strip him, and tie him to a post on which is fixed an iron cage, and in the said cage they enclose his head."

"Ho! ho, it begins well," ejaculated my worthy host, stroking his venerable beard.

"Then they put two rats in the cage."

"Why two, rather than one, or three?

"Because with three the thing would be over too quickly, and with only one too slowly, it appears. Besides a single rat would feel so lonely."

"And the rats?"

"Are fasting. You understand?"

"I take you," replied the patriarch, and his eyes glittered.

"For the first hour or so, the poor animals are excessively scared and feel very strange and out of their element before all the crowd; for of course there is a crowd, and it frightens them. They are restless, running to and fro in the confined space, climbing up and down the bars, scuttling about, but taking care not to touch the head, which moves in a terrifying way. After a time growing bolder, they come up and sniff at it, and finding it harmless tell each other to be brave. By the time the hour is up, there's no holding them! they are quite tame now and they eye the thing hungrily. The succulent tempting flesh is there, and their

little stomachs cry out: "Taste and try! Come, taste and try!" Finally they begin to nibble.

"Ha, ha! I can *see* them. And the faces the head makes!"

"Faces! I should think so. But the features are disappearing; the flesh is being stripped off bit by bit. The rats are dainty, and pick and choose. They begin with the dainty morsels, — lips, cheeks, nostrils, eyelids. At first they eat ravenously, afterwards when their first hunger is satisfied, more and more slowly; finally gorged and swollen and distended they rest awhile and take a nap. Presently having digested their meal, they return to the banquet, finish off the tender bits and attack the tough. They eat the rest of the nose, dissect the ears, lay bare the teeth, gnaw away the scalp, — the wretched man screaming, screaming all the time without a moment's intermission."

"Can he see?" the old man inquired.

"Till the rats cleared out the eye-sockets, leaving two black holes instead of eyes, I can assure you he had something else to do than watch the flies. After that, he can no longer see, or hear for the matter of that; but he can still scream, for

the teeth have guarded the tongue, — and this is what keeps the spectators amused. Eventually the rats bite through the sinews of the jaws, and the patient becomes dumb."

"I would rather he could see," Ahmed said. "Now how long does the show last?"

"Under two days the rats have bitten the skull clean and polished the bone, displaying a death's-head on a living body. He may live on another day, for no vital organ is injured; and if need be, some fortifying drug is poured down his throat. Soliman of Aleppo, the murderer of General Kleber, lived for three days after he was impaled."

"And you say they inflict this punishment on..?"

"On traitors!"

"I thank you, my son! Your account has made a heavy hour pass lightly. I thank you; and give praise to God."

II

At the edge of the deep ravine at the bottom of which, more than 300 feet below, flows the Rummel, in the South-East quarter of the city

facing the table-land of Mansourah, there still existed a few years ago a huddle of old Moorish houses, their foundations resting on fragments of ancient walls, relics of some vast Roman edifice. One of these houses, that hang literally suspended over the abyss, belonged to Ahmed-ben-Abderahman; and some months after his marriage, making a pretext of repairs to be executed in his regular dwelling in the Street of Sidi-Nemdil, he took Hadjira thither with a single maid, his negro Salem and a man of the *Ouled-Khelif*, who had served him as *Chaouch* at the time he was headman of the Oasis of Ouargla.

It is a well known fact that subterranean passages and chambers pierce the rock of Constantine in various directions, excavated in old times to serve as a refuge for the women and children in case of sudden assault, and as corn magazines in case of siege.

An Arab Writer of the twelfth Century, the Geographer, Mohamed Ed Edrisi, declares that wheat remained in them unspoiled for a hundred years. Be this as it may, it is certain that nowadays these caverns fulfil no other useful purpose but that of harbouring formidable hordes of rats.

The abode in which the ex-Caïd of Ouargla temporarily installed his household gods had a communication with one of these artificial caverns in the rock; and from the other side of the gigantic fissure you can to this day, by leaning out over the precipice, distinguish half hidden by lichen and rubbish the masonry of the archway where the subterranean gallery opens on the ravine.

Well! one night the divine Hadjira awoke suddenly with a start, oppressed by a horrible nightmare. She thought she had heard a cry of agony, her lover's voice calling on her name in piteous accents. She stretched out her arms, — and touched the shaggy beard of her husband and lawful master.

He was bending over her, and in the gloom she could see his faded eyes glittering like a wild beast's.

Then in a panic of dread she buried her face in the clothes, not daring to move, holding her breath, but quite incapable of stilling the wild beating of her heart.

"What is it?" demanded Ahmed; "why! you are trembling like a haïk shaken in the wind; your

heart thumps and thumps, as when a man beats the *tam-tam*."

"Oh! I am frightened!... Did you not hear cries?"

"'Tis only the jackals of Sidi-Mecid, scouring the slopes of the Mansourah in search of food."

He took the fair Hadjira in his arms, and resting her head against his breast, he rocked her like a child its nurse would lull to sleep, softly fondling her breasts the while.

"Sleep, darling! go to sleep!"

But she insisted: "There is some one crying out in pain. Yes! I can hear them! I swear by the Prophet there are groans coming from underground. Oh! Ahmed-ben-Abderahman, why have you brought me here? This old house is haunted; it is the dwelling-place of evil *djenouns* [1]."

"Peace, peace! my tender gazelle! What can be troubling your soul so sorely, that ill-omened voices sound in your ears at the hour when none but robbers are awake, and watchmen, — and remorse."

1. Spirits. Vide the Notes to Lane's version of the "Arabian Nights" for information concerning the large part played by the *jinn* in the Bedawin's cosmology.

"I have no remorse," replied Hadjira.

"Well, then! keep grief away. Grief is more wearing than fever."

"I have no grief."

"Then beware of sleeplessness. It dims the brightest eyes, and more surely even than time itself makes the face look worn and wrinkled."

The girl ceased for fear of leading up to more awkward questions; for all through the past week she had been shedding secret tears.

The handsome *Amin*, Al-Askoub, the beloved of her heart, was deceiving her. He was engaged in an intrigue, — she had seen it, she was certain of it, — with her maid Aïcha. Yet she was youger and a hundred times prettier than Aïcha; and for Al-Askoub's sake was she not braving her husband's wrath, and death itself?

"Oh! men, men! Ingrates and traitors, every one of them!"

So for a whole week she had been waiting to see the wretch. She was burning to reproach him, to cast up his treason at him, to spit in his face; but he never came.

Where could he be; what was he doing? His duties as a Magistrate could not be keeping him

all this time! Besides, only the day before yesterday she had overheard him below, in the antichamber with its stone benches, in conversation with her husband. Oh! to see him, if it were only for a moment! She would forget her anger, and her wrongs, and the strange dread that haunted her. And she *did* forget everything, to let her fancy linger about her lover. For a wife, once started on the downward road, is blinded by infatuation, and each step plunges her deeper in the mire of falsehood and deceit.

And when the dawn reddened behind the rocky heights of the Mansourah. her beautiful eyes were still open, and their lashes wet with tears.

*
* *

"Joy of my eyes and darling of my heart!" said Ahmed next day to his young wife; "My old friend the Caïd of the *Ouled-Ganem* invites me to the wedding of his youngest son. I shall take my *Chaouch* with me, and be away a week. But though my body will be far away, my thoughts will be with you."

"Your thoughts are no protection," objected Hadjira. "Oh! my lord! what is to become of me without you, in this dismal house, all alone with Aïcha and your negro Salem?"

"Al-Askoub will return this evening. He is my friend and my son; to whom else can I better entrust the safety of my most precious treasure?"

"You are my lord and master; you do what seems best to your good pleasure."

And the girl dropped her eyes humbly to hide the joy that sparkled in their glance.

"Ah, ha! What a night of intoxication and delight they two would have. Al-Askoub! Al-Askoub! To be with him for hours and hours. To go to sleep on his breast, with her arms about his neck! But first what a lover's quarrel they would enjoy! How she would torment him for a while, and scold him and refuse, — that they might kiss and be friends again all the more deliciously afterwards!"

Before sunset, she went with Ahmed-ben-Abd-Arahman as far as the Jebbia Gate to see him off. The old Caïd and his servant started, each mounted on a good mule, and were to sleep at a point beyond the village of El-Kroubs, so as to

arrive at their destination on the evening of the next day. The instant she had seen them finally disappear round the first turn of the road, she returned hurriedly and bade Aïsha dress her out in her best, charging her to do her utmost to enhance all her mistress's charms. The maid dyed her hands and feet with *henna*, joined her two eyebrows and painted her eyes with *koheul*, then robed her in light silken stuffs, and the two girls sat waiting.

The negro Salem was on the watch at the door below.

Towards ten o'clock there came a knock.

"It is he!" cried Hadjira.

And Aïsha repeated the words, "It is he!"

Still to make doubly sure the maid called from the top of the staircase:

"Who knocks there?"

"Sidi Al-Askoub," Salem shouted back. The fair Hadjira's heart beat tumultuously. She threw herself in a seductive pose amid the ample cushions of the couch, and in the soft light of a little alabaster lamp the flowing line of the flanks could be plainly distinguished and the curves of her ivory bosom.

" I wish to speak with him; tell him to come up hither;" she said.

And Aïsha repeated the order to Salem.

Then a strange sound could be heard on the stone staircase, a sound as of rustling phantons, accompanied by such groans as never came from human lips.

The *frechia* that hung across the doorway was raised. Hadjira started up wildly on the couch, while her maid fled in terror to her side.

Two men came in, one supporting the other; the negro Salem pushing Al-Askoub in front of him, exerting all his strength to keep him on his feet.

The young *Amin* wore the severely simple, dark robes of the native Judges, and over them the white burnouse with looped-up skirts, its hood pulled down over his face.

" Why! what is wrong? " exclaimed Hadjira, indignant to see her lover pushed in after this fashion by the negro; " is the slave drunk? Al-Askoub, is it you? uncover your face. "

With a quick movement of the hand Salem drew back the hood, and on the living body of her beloved the divine Hadjira beheld — a grinning death's-head!

She uttered a terrible cry, and the skeleton head too saw her and forced a cry from the dry throat, fixing the look of a ghoul on her face. For the eyes still glittered in their sockets, -- a ghastly sight, the fiendish vengeance of the implacable Ahmed having contrived a way to protect them from the voracity of the rats.

The wretched creature approached, making inarticulate noises like someanimal, and stretching out his arms that writhed and clutched in the horrid anguish of mortal pain.

"Back!" she screamed. "Help! the *jenouns*! the *jenouns*[1]!"

And, frenzied by the aweful spectacle, she fled shrieking like a madwoman into a corner of the room, while the dying man sank, the death rattle in his throat, on her couch.

"Throw him into the Rummel," said Ahmed ben Abd-Arahman, who looked on from the threshold of the room at the scene; "before morning the water-rats will have done the rest. So perish all traitors! — But, in Gehenna, they suffer worse; for directly their skin is consumed away in

1. The demons! the demons!

the fire, lo! they are clothed in a new one, that their torment may never end. So is it written in the Koran ever-glorious, at the Chapter — *Of Women* [1]. God is great and all-wise! "

And the old *Chaouch* and the negro repeated in chorus, "So perish all traitors! Amen! Amen!

1. A great deal of rubbish has been propagated by Christian bigots and sciolists respecting the degradation of women by Islam. The fact is that no religion in existence possesses such a minute ceremonial and domestic ritual for the guidance and protection of the female as that founded by the Arabian camel-driver six centuries ago. Over against the polygamy of the Moslem, I would invite the apologist to set the terrible and disgusting, syphilis-spreading prostitution of the Christian.

This is no place to advocate or refute one doctrine more than another. Let the student procure *A Plea for Polygamy, the History and Philosophy of Marriage* (Paris, 1898), and meanwhile meditate the following from the Qu'ran: — (*Surah* LX, 10-12; and IV, 1); "O Prophet! when believing women come to thee, and pledge themselves that they will not associate aught with God, and that they will not steal or commit adultery, nor kill their children, nor bring scandalous charges, nor disobey thee in what is right, then plight thou thy faith to them, and ask pardon for them of God: for God is Indulgent, Merciful!"

"O Men! fear your Lord, who hath created you of one man (*nafs*, soul), and of him created his wife, and from these twain hath spread abroad so many men and women. And fear ye God, in whose name ye ask mutual favours, and reverence the wombs that bare you. Verily is God watching you!

VII

THE BISKRI'S DAUGHTER

VII

THE BISKRI'S DAUGHTER [1]

I

She had no other name that any one knew of, — or rather she had culled so ample a handful

1. The *Biskris*, natives of the district and town of Biskra lying to the southward of the Province of Constantine, are found in large numbers as immigrants in all the towns of Algeria, where they become messengers, porters,

from the Calendar of Mussulman beauties to pleasure her successive lovers that no man could tell which of all the heap was her own. *Aïsha*, *Zohrab*, *Messaouda*, *Mabrouka*, *Fatma*, *Baya*, *Meryem* [1], — what did it matter which? The Biskri's daughter! that was quite enough. It was a household word through all the six squadrons of the Cavalry, where every man had heard of her fame, — not to say notoriety.

Mention it suddenly amid a company of men sitting deadly dull and silent, instantly a score of the strangest stories, the very most rowdy tales, would be bandied to and fro.

On long melancholy evenings in hospital, when

water-carriers, hodmen, muleteers, ass-drivers, street-sweepers. In fact they are in the Algerian *Tell* what the Auvergnats are in France. Hence it is customary to designate by the general name of Biskris all natives practising these callings. The Spahis, who are exempt from certain fatigue duties compulsory in other cavalry corps, hire out of their pay, in each squadron-smala, or detachment, a *biskri*, whose duty it is to keep clean the barrack-square and stables of the quarters or of the *bordj* (fort) as the case may be.

1 "Aïsha" is a contraction of "Ayesha", the name of the Prophet's favourite wife, and hence a popular appellation for Bedawin beauties; "Mess'ouda" (the happy); "*Mabrouka*" (the blessed); "Baya" (the brilliant); "Meryem" (Mary); "Fatma" "Zohrab".

the accredited story-teller was boring his audience to extinction with his *Adventures of Corporal La Ramée* or his *Princess that loved a Gendarme*, you had only to say the name to set the cripples in a roar and wake up the sleepiest.

How many nights, from the Djurjura to the Salt Lakes, from Djidjelly to Tougourt, in rain or starlight, when the men sat toasting their legs at the bivouac-fires, has her image come dancing in the firelight, with merry tales galore, that circled round the cheerful blaze!

Though out of sight, she was never out of mind. Far, far away, buried though she was in a remote corner on the distant Tunisian frontier, she was nevertheless a never-failing stimulus to mess-room jests, canteen wit and camp-fire anecdote, an object of furious jealousy to guard-house Aglaës and of much virtuous indignation to good women, — a coveted prize to all the Spahis in Algeria.

The Biskri's daughter! all talked of her, yet how few could boast they knew her! She was like those far away lands of wonder that everybody descants upon without ever having seen. A poor ten of us, at most, — we had reckoned it up, — had sailed in her tropic latitudes, had been lulled

by the wind of her *souak*-scented breath and had been burnt up like morsels of tow in the fierce rays of her great dark eyes.

Accordingly the most contradictory accounts were in circulation as to the details of her personal appearance.

Some declared she was as bony and scraggy as the miserable donkeys that cart away on their raw and bleeding backs the rubbish of Constantine to the ravines of Koudiat-Aty ; others that she was bloated and fat as a Lorraine sow. According to some she stank like a negress after running full speed to catch a hare ; according to others, she was fragrant as musk.

The first described her as of violent temper, stubborn and brutal as a she-goat in heat ; to believe the second, she was easy-going, as slack and spiritless as a foundered camel.

What to believe ? One could only conclude these illnatured Lotharios had never really got near her at all ; poor foxes whining piteously outside her door, they cried down the sour grapes. On the contrary, the happy few who *had* found means to taste, spoke with languishing eyes and watering lips of the rare flavour of the fruit.

Still all were agreed on one point. — the unparalleled beauty of the face; and what is more, in describing this beauty, the enthusiasts all told one and the same tale. And the most extraordinary thing about it, — this unanimity on the one point combined with flat contradictions on all others, — was that for the last four or five years the successive French Quartermasters appointed in turn to command the *smala* (detachment) of El-Tarf, under the superior orders of the permanent chief in command, Captain Ardaillon, the only men in the regiment to have really had an opportunity of knowing her, had regularly passed on this wonder of Nature from one to the other as a mere item in the barrack-list, along with the rest of the service furniture of the *Bordj* .

Five camp-beds complete.

Three brooms.

Two jugs.

Two basins.

An iron pot.

Four mess-tins.

A guard-room mattress.

And..... *the Biskri's daughter* !

She went along with the rest of the stuff, and

for a certain number of months, varying from three to ten, became the temporary property of the Non-Com. for the time being in command, — the arrangement of course being provisional on his paying over a reasonable rent to the worthy father of the damsel.

* * *

So when my turn of duty with the detachment came, and when after three long days on horseback my Spahi pointed me out on the slope of a bare rounded hill a green oasis, flanked by a little square building of white stone, with the words El-Tarf, my thoughts turned to the Biskri's daughter, and I ceased to feel my weariness.

" And where is she ? " I found myself asking my predecessor the same evening, when in the usual routine he was going through the barrack-list with me, as a preliminary to handing over the effects :

Four mess-tins.

A guard-room mattress.

And the Biskri's daughter.

" After a short gallop from the *Bordj*, following

the river road, you will make out on the right hand a half-dozen *gourbis* (huts) buried in fig-trees, cactuses and aloes, — that is the spot. "

" And the pass-word ? "

" *Douro* ! " (a dollar), — and it is *given* between the fore-finger and the thumb. But now listen ! Of course you can't just walk in, as you might into a Church. The matter needs some negociation and the observation of sundry formalities, and a little tact. Our Captain is a mighty stickler for morality. He keeps a Moorish mistress at Bona and a Maltese at La Calle, not to mention the Negress he has at Souk-Arras, but he means teh Tarf to be a home of virtue. Once already has he threatened the Biskri to turn him out of the *smala*, if he went on trading in the girl. So just let the old man go his own way to work. He is no fool, and when he thinks the moment opportune, will make his offer. "

" So difficult to manage as all this ? "

" Well ! well ! you are like everybody else, you think he gives his daughter to the first comer, — first come, first served ! But she's no common street-walker, I can tell you ; she is a good, obedient girl, and must be justified with the paternal

approval before she grants her favours; for she knows, if he arranges things, that she is in good hands. He takes his little precautions, examines the ground, makes sure of the applicant's good character. Don't you suppose then he is going to throw the little Bedawin lassie straight at your head. He's got to study you first, and see that you are free from vice, which would make the bargain impossible at once, and sound in wind and limb, — to make sure you take no suspicious pills or mysterious drugs. Oh! he's an excellent father, I tell you; and takes good care of his child."

"Is she really pretty?"

"I don't want to depreciate her; but there are dozens of girls at La Calle and Bona, and fine girls too, whether white or copper-coloured or black, worth half as much again and costing half the price. Still a man takes what he can get."

I slept badly. The Biskri's daughter went tripping through my dreams. In spite of what my brother officer said, — and I stronggy suspected him of being a lover who had been shown the door, — I saw her, fair and radiantly beautiful, smiling and inviting me to her side. So you may imagine how first thing next day, the very moment

first stable-duty was done, I set to work to examine curiously the father of the mysterious Almée (Arab dancing-girl), as he passed down the lines of horses, adressing them in a sharp, guttural voice :

Dour allemine, giaour!
Dour el assar, allouf!
Goudam, ad din Roumi!
Ouakkar, Youdi!

" To the right, infidel! — To the left, pig! — Come up, Christian dog! — Back, Jew [1]! " according as the long broom in his brown wrinkled hand was sweeping to right or left of the horse, in front of his nose or behind his tail. These are the everyday duties of a *biskri*, and he performed them like another.

An old Bedouin, with small, evil eyes, half hid under thick, bushy, grey eyebrows, he wore a short white beard, of a correct and orthodox cut, that brought out in high relief the coppery tints of his skin. The face, which wore a hang-dog

1. To the reader unversed in the mysteries of classical Arabic it is necessary to point out that the phrases italicised in the text are in Algerian patois and far removed from the grammatical correctness of the Quranic model.

expression, was tanned by the desert winds, and shrivelled under the scorching summer suns of sixty years.

Old scamp ! he had just the sly, villainous look you would expect in a father trading in his own flesh and blood. His mouth was big and greedy looking, and over the thin, evil lips there flitted enigmatical smiles. Their very shape showed you that, in secret, the narrow slit-like opening between them would part in a cynical, noiseless grin, as he pocketed the proceeds of his vile traffic.

A *douro* ! a crown-piece ! What depths of meanness a man's soul will fall to ! The price of his daughter's virtue ! For he always represented her as virtuous ; she was a virgin he declared without a stammer, to each new-comer he opened the bargain with for the first time.

He would say : " Sir ! I swear by my head, no man has sullied her maidenhood. "

And all the while who could count how many times over he had sold the right to stain it ?

This human satyr of the filthy mind filled me with ineffable disgust. But what I thought appeared to matter to him as little as the heaps of dung he swept up. He gave me back scorn for scorn ;

and his work done and his broom cleaned and returned to its place, he went off to the horse-trough and washed his feet and hands and finally his face. This done, he put on his sandals, wrapped his burnouse round him, and solemn as a Muezzin, dignified as an Agha, left the *Bordj*, without so much as deigning to observe a new client for his daughter had arrived, and more *douros* for him.

*
* *

The days passed one by one, and soon a week had gone by.

The ruffian had at last condescended to notice my presence. From time to time his wicked eye spoke to me, glittering athwart the shaggy tufts of his eyebrows, like a red coal behind the bars of a grate; but his mouth remained padlocked.

Was he studying me? Was he making sure of the state of my health, and the state of my morals? Well! he took his time about it! Or was he watching his opportunity, waiting the "psychological" instant, the precise moment when he must strike, intending to raise his tarif? But no! not for me. I should refuse point-blank. A *douro*

was the covenanted price, the price paid by all my predecessors. The fellow must not think to take advantage of my youth and inexperience. I was quite ready to give a crown, but not one single penny more.

The needful *douro* I preserved religiously, taking the greatest care not to break into it. I would have fasted for a whole month from " twist " and absinthe rather than make a hole in it. I had it always on me, to be ready for anything, in the lefthand pocket of my waistcoat, next my heart, — like a household god, a sacred relic, a St. Joseph's scapulary, a medal of the Blessed Virgin, any precious treasure in fact that will introduce you to the joys of Paradise.

II

The gazelle of the hour went speeding on her way, as the Poets of the *Tell* phrase it, bearing away the days.

Meanwhile, impassible as Fate and inscrutable as Time, the Biskri went on *his* way, wielding his enormous broom in the courtyard of the *Bordj*

with grotesquely exaggerated, jerky movements, and ugly smiles, as if he fancied himself mowing down Christian heads at each sweep. But for me, — he seemed to pay no more attention to me than if he had had no daughter to sell at all.

The sun was gathering heat and already beginning to prick the skin and harass the flesh with desire, and that awful *Simoom*-wind to send forth its hot breath, that came blowing over fifty leagues of desert, then suddenly puff! it would be whispering and sobbing inthe thickets like lovers' sighs, tickling the fillies' flanks and starting them galloping hither and thither over the plain, ever and anon dancing coquettishly up and exciting our troop-horses, where they stood shackled on the long-rope, almost to phrenzy. The beasts would neigh frantically, struggling to break away shackles, pickets and all. Then when one *did* escape and dashed whinnying and quivering with excitement towards them, lo! they would pretend to fly, eager all the while to be followed and caught, as is the way with the females of every race, — creatures of a thousand caprices and a thousand wiles.

I began to lose patience, and threw the old fellow winks that, short of being a born idiot, he

could not fail but understand, — as good as saying right out :

"Now then ! what say you ? About your daughter, you know ? Come, make up your mind and say the word. What are you waiting for ? You can see well enough *I'm* ready ! " All in vain ! Not a muscle moved ; a graven image could not have been more impassive than the creature.

Two or three times I posted myself at the gate of the *Bordj* and watched for him coming up the hill. Than I would go to meet him, and halt like a note of interrogation on two legs in front of him, or else pass close by him, with the idea that, out of earshot of every living thing, he would stop, or at any rate throw me a word in passing : " You're ready ? Well and good ! Hand over the *douro* ; and she shall expect you to-night. " But no ! Instead of holding out his great greedy hand to me, he would lay it on his heart, and all I got was a commonplace *salamalek*.

Go to ! you old scamp.

So his daughter was a myth ! Her fame, like so many other women's, a traveller's tale ? Her story, a mystification ?

I did not know what to think ; while disap-

pointment and curiosity both at once spurred me on, as well as the languorous burning caresses of the *Simoom*.

Under the walls of the *Bordj*, on the slope of the isolated hill on which it stood, was a wonderful garden, wherein flourished a Tropical flora in all the luxuriant entanglement of a hot-house. Bananas, citrons, pomegranates, fig-trees and vines all grew in the crowded space thicker than common weeds in our climate with its luke-warm suns.

In a few years' time the Commandant of the *Bordj*, one of the last of our "working" soldiers, — that ideal of old General Bugeaud [1], had created this fragment of the garden of Eden out of a bit of moorland encumbered with *bush*; and used to

1. The name of Bugeaud is associated with many of the most important successes of the French arms in Africa. He beat Abd-el-Kader on the Sikkak, near Tlemsen, in 1836; he overthrew the army of Morocco at Isly in 1844; and he subdued the greater part of Kabylia Proper in 1846; showing the greatest decision and the most determined courage throughout. Marshal Bugeaud, who was created Duke of Isly after his victory, had served under Napoleon at Saragossa (1809), as we have previously seen, and presided over Algeria as Governor-General from 1841 to 1846. He died at Paris, of cholera, in 1849.

show it with pride to the tourists, few and far between, who ventured on our desert roads, as a specimen of the wealth the Colonists could extract from the Algerian soil, if only real live Colonists could be drawn from the soil of France to try the experiment. In the background, a close hedge of thick-leaved plants surrounded a vegetable garden and a cotton-field.

Beyond, extended the plain sown with barley, wheat and maize, cut in straight lines by the green rows of the oleanders, right away to the horizon where stretched a dark, bluish, wavy line, the strip of woodland fringing the banks of the Oued-Zitoun.

A noble scene for an Idyll; but where, oh! where, was the nymph of the Idyll?

Hidden in a fold of the plain, buried in the cactuses, I had discovered the *gourbis* (huts) of the *Khrammès* and many a time I would guide my horse in their direction, yet without daring to stop for fear of attracting the attention and mockery of the little goat-boys who, lying full length on the grass, stared with their great dark eyes at the new *Roumi* as he rode by. It would never do to let them suspect the secret object of my desires.

Goats, children, mangy donkeys, frowsy camels, repulsive faces of miserable Bedawins eaten up with abject poverty, an old man with horrible, sore eyes, an ugly, tattered hag who never lifted her eyes from her work of hunting her fleas, a score of surly, half-starved dogs following the hens about with hungry looks, — these were all the visible attractions.

And I would ride back the *Bordj*, more and more exasperated with the Biskri.

Yet he had had ample evidence for a good month past of my high moral characted and the regularity of my conduct, for I never once left the boundaries of the *Smala.*

The Chiebanas, it appears, were on the war-path. A half dozen had been seen at the frontier shaking out the folds of their burnouses in a tragic, threatening manner. It was merely the South-wind blowing them about, I thought for my part; but the Captain's cook, an old Chas.-d'Af. (Chasseur d'Afrique) who understood these things, said it meant war. A fire too had been kindled at night in the direction of Roum-el-Souk, a market for miscellaneous produce where the Ouled-Dieb barter the leeches they catch in their marshes

against the honey of the Beni-Amar. Last but not least, only the other day an old woman passing within two paces of a Moor, a Gendarme in the service of the Bureau Arabe of La Calle, had mumbled in a boding tone some words the man had been unable to catch. Such a state of things could not go on, — especially when at the very gates of La Calle, an Arab, as insolent as he was ragged, had stolen two water-melons out of the garden of an honest, peaceable innkeeper, and a general dealer's wife, a woman of unimpeachable veracity, declared she had seen him make off, the fruit of his crime under his arm, in the direction of the Kroumirs' country.

The smell of powder was in the air, and as day by day we were expecting the order to mount and ride to exact vengeance for all these outrages and protect the threatened frontier, the Captain absolutely refused all leave to visit the town.

*
* *

Meantime the plain of the *Tarf*, till now a deserted waste, began to show signs of life, and to be dotted with brown spots arranged in circles.

These were the *douars* (village-encampments) [1] of the Ouled-Ali, who, regardless of the rumours of impending war, were flocking in for the harvest. The far-spreading brown carpet of wheat and barley soon began to show yellow gaps. The men, armed with the angular Arab sickle, cut the grain and piled it in sheafs, while twice a day, before and after the time of greatest heat, the women wound in file along the narrow paths by the river-side, some bent double under the weight of the goat-skin water-bag, the dripping *guerba*, others very straight and upright carrying on their head the *sebbal* (earthenware bowl) with its Etruscan look.

1. "The arrangement of all the douars is similar, consisting of about 20 huts or tents, according to the season, one of which is devoted to each family. The tent is made of a black and very thick wollen tissue, which swells with the damp and keeps out the rain, requiring much labour in its manufacture. The weather being very fine during two-thirds of the year, they only require a roof of branches, supported on pickets of wood, for their huts, brushwood being piled up on the weather side. These huts, placed at about 10 metres apart, form a circle, with the cattle in the centre, and contain numerous savage dogs as guardians. The douars are moved when the neighbouring pastures are exhausted, seldom remaining in one place above three months together. The great quantity of dung accumulated by their cattle forms the only manare they employ". (Baude, I, p. 174).

At each step their short cotton tunic, tightened at the waist by means of a woollen cord, lifted lightly, widening the ample gaps at the sides and giving excellent views to any lover of the nude.

Ah, me! what a march past! What a procession of dainty, toothsome morsels, — and of broken meats stale with over-keeping! Thighs white as milk and plump as a new Padisha's wives' just bought in the slave market, limbs as dark and dry and shrivelled as a Haymour she-ass's legs; hips recalling the seven lean kine of King Pharaoh's dream, quarters huge as a Norman roadster's, she-goat's dugs dismally beating against the wrinkled body the passing-bell of departed comeliness; breasts so firm and rounded Phidias might have moulded his immortal goblet on them; every tone that human flesh can show, from dead white and tenderest pink to the deep red of old Cordova leather; all the harmonious graces of youth and adolescence, all the battered lines of old age and poverty; — hags and houris!

Bono la mouquera [1], said a voice at my side in *petit sabir* (pigeon French-Arabic), — a voice I recognized instantly and which dissipated my

1. From Spanish "buena mujer" (a good or fine woman).

brown study in a moment. I had stopped my horse, and was watching this procession of Biblical figures The voice went on : *Mouquera bono besef* [1]*!*

" Why, yes ! Biskri, when she is pretty ! " I returned.

" *Mouquera arabia pretty besef.*

" Not all of them, my friend. "

" Ah ! you say well, Sir ! No ! not all, not all ; for the Lord of the human seed-field has been unjust in dividing the harvest so unfairly. He should have made them all fair, that there might have been more happy women in the world. But there is a maid here ; — turn your head a little and look ! — what think you of her ? "

He winked his evil eye, turning back his thumb over his shoulder, signing me to look behind him.

" Ah, ha ! at last ! "

Yes ! there she stood, within two steps of me, the adorable creature ! Her bright young face half hidden, half revealed, peeped out from the cactus hedge, the yellow fruit and thick grey-green leaves of which with their spiky brown thorns made a quaint setting to her girlish beauty.

A heavy thud seemed to fall on my head, — the

1. A sufficienthy fine woman.

rebound from the sudden shock my heart experienced.

No! never, — in the Old town of Constantine, in the low quarters round the *Djebbiah* Gate, where you may choose at moderate prices among assorted samples of every type of African beauty; never, — in Algiers the White, where pretty girls of every land from Timbuctoo to Tuggurt and from Tunis to Tangier, Moorish, Berber, Bedouin fair ones, beauties of the Sahara, Jewesses, Negresses, are a drug in the market; never, never had I beheld any that stirred me so!

Clad in a striped *gandourah*, fastened at the shoulders with two silver brooches and lifted in front by the swell of her bosom, the two firm pointed breasts making two long pleats downwards, as in some " deep-breasted " Greek statue, with arms and limbs bare, the fair skin showing glints of gold, youthful and slim and proud, she seemed the very personification of Arab loveliness.

Her great dark eyes, " deep as a well, where trembles a star ", her full, finely cut lips, so red you might suppose them painted, her long lashes and her eyebrows joined to one another by black

koheul[1], the dazzling line of her teeth, the girlish sweetness of her face and the womanly harmonious curves of her figure, all made sweet proclamation of youth and beauty, — a gentle poem of delight and love !

And even as I gazed, I felt her velvety eyes cover me with their caress ; an enigmatical smile flitted over her lips and..... the vision disappeared.

What ! vanished so soon ! Let me look again ! again ! I would fain surfeit my eyes on her beauty !

The old rascal was smiling too ; and his eyes

1. "Kohol", a preparation of sulfurate of antimony, is largely used by Bedawin women who claim for it several qualities viz : — that it gives greater lustre to the eyes by framing them with a bluish-black border ; preserves the sight from ophthalmia ; stops the flow of tears ; and, imparts to the look greater boldness and limpidity. Tradition maintains that it was a Yaman woman who first used kohal to mask a chronic inflammation of the eyelids and, it is asserted, that she acquired a sight so piercing and keen as to distinguish a man or woman at a distance of two day's march ! Negresses, in imitation of their Bedawin *maîtresse*, are likewise given to the use of this chemical. We have noticed that some Parisian prostitutes also employ it, forgetful that Nature has made their eyes more lascivious and fascinating than any cunning tricks of Art can ever do.

wandered tenderly over the spot where her form had stood.

Disregarding in my excitement and pleasure the rules of Mussulman politeness, which forbids any man to question another as to the women of his household, I said :

" Your daughter? is that your daughter? "

His eye flashed angrily, and he answered me roughly, almost threateningly :

" She is what she is ! "

But what cared I for his anger? Through the gaps between the fluted boughs of the Barbary figs, I thought I could still distinguish the soft waving of her white robe and the glint of her fair skin, and I was straining my eyes to see them better.

Then I caught sight of her once more, standing in a flood of sunlight, her figure relieved against the dark interior of the *gourbi*, the door of which was open ; her silver ear-rings and silver bracelets threw off a thousand sparkles, and the bright silk kerchief of Tunis that was round her head blazed with its gold embroideries. Finally she dived into the shadow of a hut and disappeared, giving me a last glimpse of a lifted skirt and flying *gandourah*.

" A *douro* for her! a *douro*! Holy Prophet of God! a *douro*! And straightway I comprehended the reckless madness of those Princes in the Fairy Tales who spread out their kingdoms as a carpet beneath the feet of the shepherdesses they adored.

III

Towards the evening I enjoyed a short colloquy with the Biskri, the immediate outcome of which was the transference of a *douro* from my pocket to his.

Later still, when the night was as black as ink and all the *Bordj* was sleeping, and nothing was to be heard on the plains but the barking of the village dogs and the yelping of the jackals, I sallied out wrapped in my burnouse.

At the foot of the slope, a gray shadow appeared.

" My son! before we go a step farther, tell me if the *douro* you have given is for your servant. "

" Certainly it is ".

" Well then ! add another to it for *Her*. "

" I am only grieved I have not a hundred ; I would give her them every one ! "

" Ah, ha ! you are a connoisseur, you are ! you can appreciate our daughters' beauty. It is well ; God shall open his hand and send you fair virgins in showers. "

He had opened his own at the word to grasp the coin. He proceeded to rub it against his forehead, to try it on the hard surface of his thumb-nail ; finally, satisfied it was the genuine article, he knotted it in one corner of his *haïk*.

" Two words more. Keep your mouth closed ; avoid all noise. For my neighbours, the *Khrammès*, might hear you, and the howls and hootings they would lavish on you would be a cloud of infamy to overwhelm my head, like a rain of locusts on the fig-trees in bloom. Be dumb ; Love has no need of words. Follow me ! "

To tell the truth, I felt profoundly ashamed of myself to be following a father in this way, who was leading me the way to his own child's dishonour. A mother doing the same would have seemed less revolting to me, — perhaps only because this

sort of traffic is not uncommon amid the abominations of great cities; but this old man who could not make any pretence of dire poverty his excuse struck me as an odious creature.

I scarcely believed in my good fortune now, though the bargain was actually struck; and I was no sooner at the door of the *gourbi* than I felt half inclined to draw back, now fearing some mystification, now feeling repugnance at the base bargain I was a party to.

A sort of stable, or rather shed, lay ambushed behind a thick cactus-hedge, like a thief eyeing the passers-by.

A short way off, in the midst of a clump of trees whose branches were outlined as if in a charcoal sketch upon the black blue of the sky, I recognized the family *gourbi*, the *domus sanctum*, the home, the house where the little ones sleep and no stranger may enter.

I mentally thanked the Biskri for having so much sense of shame left. At any rate he made a secret of his trade to his belongings. It might have been worse. The reports of our criminal courts tell us from time to time of mothers at home who have lost even this last rag of modesty. Thedoor

of the hut stood open. The interior looked dark and forbidding. However my guide plunged into the gloom.

" You are there ? "

" Yes ! I have been waiting an hour, " answered a low, timid voice.

Then, turning to me :

" Go in, my son ! Take your pleasure, and never count the time. Minutes of pleasure are pearls that God throws us on the stony road of life. Stop and pick them up. "

With these words he went out and shut to the door, as if, to accommodate his child's modesty, he wished the hut even darker than it was before.

Bending double and groping in the gloom, I stepped forward with a beating heart. A strong scent of musk assailed my nostrils ; a hand drew me down, arms that made a tinkling of silver rings as they moved, folded me in their embrace and a mouth was laid on mine...

*
* *

Next morning, after breakfast, I was striding gaily over the undulating thorny common on the slope of the hill behind the *Bordj* of El-Tarf.

My blood still fevered by my sleepless night, I was recalling one by one the lovely features of my Odalisque, repeating to myself the lines of a poet of Bou-Saada :

Her locks caress her shoulders
Like two heavy meshes of silk ;
Her brows are two bows of ebony ;
Her eye is like the midnight sky,
Wherein glitters a star ;
Her lip, the open pomegranate
That a man bites when he is a-thirst.
Her bosoms are white as the snow
That falls on the Djebel-Amour :
They have the firmness of marble,
The elasticity of a well-filled *Metara* ;
They are sweeter than honey....."

And so on and so on, down to her feet, and their toe-nails, which were likened to the pretty pink shells you pick up on the shores of the Great Lake.

However, not to go beyond the actual truth, I

was bound to admit that the description should by rights stop short at the chin, for as a matter of fact I had beheld nothing but the girl's face and some curving outlines no sooner seen than gone again. But these fugitive glances had justified the highest hopes; and as almost always happens, the reality was far inferior to fancy's painting, and possession fell much below the level of expectation.

"Roumi! Ho! Roumi."

I turned to look. Under a bush of broom, a woman sat crouching, stretching her legs in front of her, all reddened by the sun and marked with curious arabesques by a series of varicose veins.

Her covering was a tattered robe of blue cotton cloth; and she was dirty, sun-burned and skinny. Her skull was seamed with old scars, only half hidden by thin wisps of brown wool that pretended to be hair. She was forty at the lowest computation; and had evidently lived a stormy life. Through the rents in her rags she displayed, with a fine scorn of appearances or possibly with an evil intent, a pair of long, drooping, dusky-looking breasts, while the front of her short petticoat,

drawn back between her legs, left her big, reddened thighs naked.

A little leather bag, stuffed full of musk, was hung round her neck by a string of camel's hair, and reposed in the depths of her deeply furrowed bosom.

" Roumi! Ho! Roumi. "

She smiled at me amorously, making a gesture to me to sit down by her side.

I merely cast a look of disgust at the creature, and passed on without answering.

" Roumi! " she cried after me, for the fifth time.

" Well! what is it you want then? "

" What do I want! Why! I have been waiting for you. The *Khrammès* of the *Smala* told me you often took your morning walk among these lonely thickets. The Roumis love the daughters of the *Chaouias*, and here, behind the bushes, we can have our pleasure without fear of prying eyes. "

I resumed my way with a shrug of the shoulders.

" Oh! do not leave me so. Stop! stop! Listen; the Prophet says : " An honourable farewell and a word of kindness is due to the woman you have no need of more ; remember, when you are leaving

her, that erstwhile she gave you some moments of pleasure. " But True Believers and Infidels are all alike in this. Ingratitude is the badge of them all. Once satisfied, they push away the dish, and turn away their head and say, " I am not hungry any more ! " But though satiated for the time, you will be hungry again anon. Lo ! is it not the season when the *Simoom* fires the heart and inflames the appetites ? Yes ! yes ! you will be a-thirst and hungry for love, and you will thank Allah who lets you find *Mabrouka the Kroumir* once more.

" You ! " I exclaimed with a quite unaffected start of surprise and horror.

" Yes, I ! who but I ? Lie down by my side ; I would speak yet another word with you. I know the way a woman can tame a recalcitrant lover. My ears are astounded at your scornful words ; but my heart tells me my ears have played me false. Hearken to me, young Roumi. So long as the sickle shall be busy in the fields, until the grain is dried and the corn ground in all the plain of El-Tarf, I shall tarry with the tents of the Ouled-Ali. When you want me, you will always find me here amid the junipers, morning and evening. You have but to let me know the day and the hour ; there

is no need to take the Biskri of the Fort as go-between again. When a coin passes through many hands, it loses weight sadly. "

Then, slowly, she untied a corner of the clout that bound her head, and showing me ten half-pence :

" Look ! " she said, how the coin you gave the Biskri has diminished ! "

" What do you mean ? " I cried, astounded and horrified, seeing in a flash the whole hateful truthtt " The Biskri ! Explain, woman ! tell me what you mean. "

" Why ! very likely you put in his hand a whole, shining, bright dollar ; and there you see all that has reached mine. "

" Two ! why ! I gave him two ! "

" The dog ! the mean cur ! " she groaned, in a pitiful whine. " May his wife, if ever he takes a new one, cheat him every day and every night ! May his daughter, whom he guards and watches over like stolen treasure, give him for sons-in-law all the tribe of the Ouled-Ali, and of the Beni-Amar, all the men of the Chiebanas and of the Kroumirs, and then make herself a slave to the lusts of the Roumis ! Two *douros*, do you say ?

Tell me again. It cannot be! Two *douros*! You paid him two *douros* for me. Oh! the cursed villain! Eblis the Damned (the Devil) hurl him into the Oued-Zitoum, a rope round his neck, like a mangy hound. Why! he has pocketed nineteen bonnie bits of silver out of twenty, tossing me the refuse like a gnawed bone! Thief! thief! And he has done it before! For every year when I come down to the plains for the harvest, he entices me to his *gourbi* to sell me to the Christian dogs! Allah! Allah! And yet big Baya, of the Ouchtatas, who comes down sometimes for the sowing, warned me too. For years she has been like me, letting thebeggarly thiefmake his profit out of her!"

And drunk with fury, with blood-shot eyes and foaming lips, her features contorted in a hideous grimace, she stretched out her shrivelled arm, encircled with its copper bracelets, towards the huts of the *Krammès*, then drawing herself up to her full height, strode at me.

"You are rich, rich, if you pay two *douros* for a woman! I see; you came to an understanding with the old villain to swindle me, you dog you! Cursed Roumi! Give me ten halfpence more, thief that you are!"

I pushed the woman back with all my strength, guarding my face the while against her long, sharp nails. Then I took to my heels in a passion of shame and indignation, — but with a perfect comprehension from this time forth of my predecessors' relations with the lovely *Biskri's daughter!*

VIII

SHORT COMMONS

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SHORT COMMONS

Everybody, that is to say everybody who has had the honour to wear his country's uniform, has more or less frequently, — been on *short commons*. But very few have ever been, like the Officers and Non-Commissioned officers of the 4th Squadron of the 3rd Spahis, in a position to enjoy their short commons with uncommon gusto.

As a matter of fact, if we were reduced to dine with Duke Humphrey, as the saying is, it was a great deal our own fault. By the orders of General Exea, long previous to the providential discovery of the Kroumirs, we had made a descent on the Tunisian frontier between La Calle and Souk-Arras, and had wasted the country with fire and sword.

To tell you *why*, is more than I can do.

An old hen stolen from an influential Colonist, a wipe of a ruined Bedouin's *matraque* over the

pate of some thieving Jew usurer, sundry hundreds of thousands of francs to be added to the pile of some Army Contractor "in the swim", and crash! bang! smash! set to work rifles and rockets and shells, sword and bayonet, and big guns, and to finish up, fire the *gourbis* (native huts), orchards and standing crops!

I can see them at this moment in my mind's eye flaring up, and admire the graceful white puffs of smoke from the long *moukalas* taking pot shots from the *bush*, and the blazing ricks, and the sappers' axes hacking furiously at the fig-trees and olives and big old vine trunks, while the foraging parties, little flames the while darting hither and thither along the ground and snapping up at their horses' legs, gallop madly through the smoking fields of blackened wheat and barley shrivelling in the heat! and crash! bang! whoop! the fugitives are sabred as they run, and fall biting the smouldering ashes, — all that is left of their golden harvest.

When I think over these merry doings of my young days, my old heart swells, I tell you, and my rheumatic pains "of yester-year" feel warmed and comforted.

Why, of course! a country-side reduced to ashes to pay for the Mayor's hen, — his Worship is the Deputy's cousin, remember: villages burnt down, and crops and olives and orchards consumed, for a Jew swindler's broken head; hundreds of poor devils sent to *Kingdom Come*, to give our worthy friend the Contractor, — one of the bigwigs of Constantine, mind you! — the chance of ridding himself in favour of the Expeditionary Force of his stock of brown-paper soled boots and rancid bacon that was rotting in the warehouse! Well! well! that's how we're made, we Europeans; and then, after all, with savages you know, no need to be over particular, is there?

But now, consider our situation! Nothing eatable left anywhere in the whole country-side! The raid had been perfectly fruitless, the flocks and herds having been all driven off long before the attack could be delivered; whilst we, who had been thrown forward more than two leagues ahead of the column to try and overtake them, were bound to halt at the frontier.

Night had closed in, and we were sitting with empty bellies and anxious hearts, toasting our legs at the bivouac fires, waiting for fresh supplies

to drop down from heaven. But there! the God of the Christians has completely run out of stock, since he made manna to descend like rain in the Desert for forty yours, — time when he was God of the Jews.

So we grumbled sulkily, like the Israelites before the miraculous arrival of the quails in camp, and our *murmuring* was directed in particular against Mother *Fortenpoil*[1], a stalwart matron of

1. *Fortenpoil* is rather a dangerous word to English. The nearest equivalent is perhaps "Mother hairy-chops" and the student needs hardly to be informed that this expressive appellation extends to elsewhere than the "chops". Hairy women have the reputation of being very voluptuous. Numbers of women are to be met with in France who possess very pronounced moustaches. This "wolf-like fluff on the upper lip" is seen only in brunettes, as a rule, but hirsuteness is also seen often in abnormal *rousses*, or red-haired women. An English journalist in connection with this fact, related to us that when on a visit to a school of painting in the *Quartier Latin* he saw three women-models absolutely naked, one of them being a *rousse* (or *rouquine*), and on this latter Nature had bestowed at the lower part of the abdomen a crinose manifestation of triangular shape of a surprising and extraordinary abundance. The pilous developement of the other two females offered nothing out of the common. Many are the curious notes we have made upon this out of the way subject, but, alas! Propriety sternly forbids their inclusion here. In the *Secrets of Women* (Paris, 1899) the matter is

some forty summers and wife of a worthy eating-house keeper of La Calle, — known also and indifferently according to circumstances as Mother *Fortenreins* or Mother *Fortengueule* [1]. These nicknames speak for themselves ; so I need only add that she followed the troops in the quality of civilian, unattached canteen-woman, and that she had that very morning promised us a tasty supper after our hot day's march.

For a while we had seen her trotting steadily at our heels, but then all of a sudden she had disappeared in the confusion, mule and paniers and all, without one word of warning and without saying where she was bound to.

" She must have gone over to the enemy, " said our Lieutenant, de Pracontal, with a grin ! she's plump and fat, — I'll be bound the Caïd of Roum-el-Souk has made her an advantageous offer. "

" No ! no ! her moustaches are much too big, "

treated at greater detail, and in the *Perfumed Garden Man's Heart to Gladden*, which we have done out of the Arabic and shall shortly hand to the printer, we hope to publish some very valuable information on lanuginous women.

1. Try : *Strong i' th'arm, Strong i' th'back, Strong i' th' jaw.*

retorted Captain Fleury; "Caïd Salah is like the examining Magistrate of Souk-Arras, he prefers them beardless!"

"Short commons, — and tough at that!" muttered little Clapeyron, our Sub-Lieutenant, woefully, having just broken a tooth over a hunk of burnt goat's-flesh a Spahi had brought us in triumph; "I'd rather have dry bread and an onion."

"Bread and an onion! Why! you're an Epicure, Sir!" cried the Commandant Rambaut. "Hold your tongue, Sir! you make our mouths water."

"Oh! if only Mother Fortenpoil would but turn up."

But as no Mother Fortenpoil did turn up, why, they just went on with the tough goat's-flesh.

* * *

But really, what had they to grumble about, the gluttons? We poor Non-Coms were worse off still! we had no bread, no onion, no burnt goat's meat to set our teeth in, not even the remains of black biscuit and the half dozen dried dates, our

Spahis' regular rations. There was not a blessed thing to put in Duke Humphrey's stew-pot, not a thing to do but roast our legs before the camp-fire. This we did with a will, while near by, our respected superiors the Lieutenants, heartened up by their goat's meat, were singing out, to the tune of "Lampions", for Mother Fortenpoil to serve round the Liquor :

"Fort-en-poil; Fort-en-poil!" in chorus; then once again, with variations, "Fort-en-poil! Fort-en-reins! Fort-en-reins! Fort-en-gueule!"

"Oh! call away," ejaculated a hollow voice, "keep the ball rolling, gentlemen!"

Then little by little issuing from the galley, appeared in the circle of light thrown by the camp-fire, the head of Jacobot.

Moustache bristling, coarse face, generally scarlet, just now pale and haggard-looking, stove-pipe *chechia*, eyebrows forming two circumflex accents and eyes like notes of interrogation, he stood gazing at us.

You don't know Jacobot; but I can assure you he was very well known in the six Squadrons. He had passed through all six one after the other, drummed out of each in turn for chronic drunken-

ness. He had joined the regiment as Trumpeter, and had come originally from the Chasseurs d'Afrique. He would infallibly have been kicked out for good and all but for the Commandant, Rambaut, who did what he could for the clever scamp ; for to his talents as trumpeter he added those of an excellent Cook. I say an excellent Cook, but it was something more than this ; he was a Cook of quite extraordinary gifts, not merely in the commonplace art Baron Brisse preaches up, the art of using up the scraps, but in the very much rarer and still more praiseworthy one of making something — and something good, — out of nothing at all, contriving delicious soups out of common grass, and turning potatoes into truffles.

But, as his talent was just as extraordinary for breaking crockery and surreptitiously drawing corks, the Commandant had dispensed with his regular services, only calling in his assistance on great occasions.

By the light of the embers, Jacobot proceeded to scrutinize one after the other our faces, the long dismal faces starved men pull, then broke out in a silent grin that stretched from ear to ear.

This mysterious mirth exercised our curiosity beyond all bearing.

"Halloa! Jacobot, nothing to eat?"

The fellow winked in a knowing way:

"Why! that depends..." he replied.

We all looked up eagerly.

"Depends on what?"

"Depends on how many pints of wine you are good for, when we get back again to Bona or La Calle."

"A pint a head," cried the *Marchef*; "eh? how's that?"

"Pooh! if I were to go to the *Kebirs'* tent, they would promise me two, or three very likely; but I am not on speaking terms with them. Make it a couple of pints a head, and I will give you the preference."

"Makes twelve pints we shall owe you; it's a bargain. Now, what are you going to fry us?"

"A lovely dish I have straight from Mother Fortengueule. It'll make you lick your chaps."

"Very good! and now serve up hot, and quick."

"Ha! ha! how you run on, *Marchef*! Easy to see you're no cook. Why! I shall want two good

hours at shortest. But there! just you think of the long nose the *Kebirs*, who are cracking their jaws over their braxy goat's meat, will pull, when they smell my fry over here."

And with these words, he slipped away, starting off at a round pace for somewhere.

II

To satisfy your appetite after a long fast, to have good savoury meat for your teeth to work on, to eat your fill and say with the Arabs: "God be praised; my belly is full," is one of those pleasures a man appreciates in direct proportion to their rarity; but that night we were very specially and particularly well pleased, and as Brillat Savarin[1] would have put it, our "palate was surfeited with gastronomic delights."

Oh! the rich, juicy slices! the tasty bits! the

1. Author of *Physiologie du Goût*, a French work which appearing about 1860, created a great sensation for its wit combined with clever directions in the culinary art. It is still largely appreciated by the bibliophile *savoureux*.

delicious fat, that melted in the mouth! What was it we were eating? We hadn't a notion; but it was a fine, steaming ragout, highly spiced, not too thick and not too thin, rich, savoury, perfect, a stroke of genius on the part of Jacobot : and proving once again the truth of the aphorism we owe to the one truly great Magistrate France can boast since Montesquieu : "The discovery of a new dish makes more for the happiness of mankind than the discovery of a new planet."

We could not have enough; we licked our fingers, and laughed, and cried, "Encore! encore!" We wished not to leave one mouthful, but we had to, for the huge camp-kettle had been brim-full to begin with. So with that praiseworthy generosity and love for our fellow-creatures a good dinner produces, we sent over the remains of the good things to the next tent, where the Corporals had been awakened by the appetising smell of the meat and the noisy gaiety we indulged in in our satisfaction, and were kicking their heels in the dark, with greedy eyes and dilated nostrils.

"What ever is it? what have they got in the pot? My word, why! they live like Aldermen. By God! but it smells good. Good old Jacobot!

Where did you get your *freschteak?*[1] Thief of the world! wherever *did* he sneak the meat?"

It was our brawny Commandant, Rambaut, speaking. The good smell had brought him out too, and up he came sniffing the seductive odour.

"Beg pardon, Sir!" returned the Trumpeter, who by rights should have been *cordon bleu* to an Archbishop: "it's a dish, — I won't say of my own invention, for Mother Fortenpoil gave me the recipe, *and* the ingredients; but there, Sir! I have done my best.... And if you wish, I can serve you up another like it to-morrow for the mess."

"Why! have you got any meat?"

"I should not be called Jacobot *the King's Hēad-Cook*, if I didn't know where to lay hands on some. Only it is a long way, and thirsty work."

"That shall be made all right, sot that you are! Start in good time, and be back the same. The mess counts on you."

1. Algerian slang for "grub", *boullotage*, or *boustifaille*, as food is called in French *argot*.

* * *

And the mess were justified in their confidence, for Jacobot, not having enjoyed any advantages in the way of political training and being quite innocent of the education of cities, never failed to keep his word.

Stable-duty was hardly done next morning before the Officers found themselves seated in a circle on the grey sand, tasting of the veritable joys of heaven, — embodied in the form of little meat-pies. Little pies, all hot, browned and crusty, crisp, tasty, rich, melting in the mouth. Merely to look at them, your lips grew moist with longing, as at the sight of a pretty girl's rosy cheeks.

They were still busied with the pleasures of the table when the Spahis on guard signalled the approach of a sumpter-mule and panniers, just topping the horizon. At first they thought it was Madame Fortenpoil [1] arriving with the canteen

1. With further reference to the note of a few pages back concerning this name, a correspondent of ours, a medical man, sends us the following, curious case of extraordinary pilous development.

supplies, and were just preparing to chaff the good lady with all the gay self-assurance of men

When a student in Paris, many years ago, he came across a *grisette* of about seventeen years of age, who presented a most curious abnormality : Just between her two breasts, but a little lower down, there grew a thick lock of dark, wavy, hair some five inches long tapering to a point and about one inch broad at its basis. This strangely situated, isolated tuft was of the same texture and gloss as the hair of the head, in itself plentiful and handsome. There was no possible connection between it and the hair on the pubes, which merely covered the *Mons Veneris*. It was of finer, more silky texture and very curly.

The young lady in question was rather proud of her breast-lock, which somewhat resembled the beard of a turkey-cock, and she was always ready to show it to those who had sufficiently gained her esteem to deserve that favour.

The Doctor also communicates to us a further case of abnormal pilous development which came under his observation in the South of France, a few years later. This was that of a rather handsome woman of about thirty years of age, who presented a most wonderfully abundant development of hair on and around the pubes. The *mons veneris* was hidden beneath a dense forest of dark hair, which extended on either side to the extremity of the iliac. But the most extraordinary part of this exuberant growth was that it extended also in thick, flocculent masses on each side of the *labia majora* right down to their commissure, so dense and long indeed, that the intervention of a comb became at particular moments necessary to prevent an obstruction of the *hortus muliebris*. The doctor adds that this lady was a rich brunette of the South and with an ardent temperament and a most amiable disposition.

who have dined well; but, no! they saw it was only her husband, escorted by two horsemen of the *goum*.

"Ho! ho! *you*'re a nice fellow! a broth of a boy, aren't you now? You're like the great grand Duke of York, who invariably came up just three hours too late for the battle. You may just go to the right about, and take your stinking bacon with you. But, have you got any liquor, anyhow?"

"A dozen bottles, — fresh supply!" replied the man. "But you can't possibly have finished the little cask my wife brought you in yesterday, surely? — Halloa! here's some little meatpies tell me the goodwife isn't far off."

"Your wife! my poor, dear Fortenpoil, we have not seen so much as the shadow of her moustaches. The little pies are the handiwork of this noble fellow," added the Commandant, pointing to Jacobot, who dropped his eyes modestly; "without him we should have died of hunger!"

"Not seen my wife!" cried the *Mercanti*; "but then, where is she? The trollop, it's the very last time she shall play me any of her tricks. Why! she's gone and carried off with her a tip-

top ham, and a lot of tinned provisions I meant for you, Gentlemen, and which I packed with my own hands. I wager the good-for-nothing has gone off with those Turco fellows. Yes! indeed, Gentlemen, barring this dozen of wine, she's made a clean sweep, — and you see before you a starving man, starving since yesterday."

"And *we* are dying of thirst. Now you refresh yourself with some of the pies : and Jacobot will unpack the bottles."

"No refusing you, Gentlemen. But, oh! what lovely meat-pies! Jacobot, I am going to set up a restaurant at Bona : when your time's up, look you, I engage you as my *chef*. Oh! the trouble that wife of mine gives me!" sighed the *Mercanti*, swallowing an enormous mouthful. But it was a mercy he did not choke himself, for at that very moment there trotted up a third horseman of the *goum*, mounted on a sorry, limping half-starved nag, and shouting at the top of his voice :

"Ze madama in ze ravine, ze madama down in ze ravine!"

"What are you talking about? What *madama*?"

"Ze madama Mercanti," answered the Bedouin,

and pointed to the dry torrent-bed a couple of gun-shots away, where a ravine cut deep in the chalky soil, behind a row of oleander-bushes.

And there it was we found Madame Fortenpoil. Lying on her face, her head under a tuft of alpha-grass, as if seeking shade, she looked as if she were fast asleep, —, the sleep that knows no waking!

The forehead had been split open with a sharp flint, and the brains trickled through the gash, making a little pool of blood and greyish matter on the ground. The flies were thick on it, and it was already drying up under the morning sun.

You might have supposed it an accident. But a few yards away, lay the wine-barrel broached; the wine was spilt all about and the canteen-baskets broken open and empty, — all proving the unfortunate woman to have been murdered by the Bedouins.

"My wife! my *poor* wife!" cried the *Mercanti*.

"And look! they have violated her, as they always do," said I, pointing with the tip of my sword-scabbard to the marks of bloody fingers having been dried on her dress.

"Worse than that," screamed the Canteen-man suddenly. Surprised at the unwonted appearance the body presented as it lay face downwards, and looking to see if there were not some other wound, he had just raised the petticoats; "worse than that, gentlemen! My God! look."

"Extraordinary idea the savages have had!" ejaculated the Commandant; "when she calls the roster of her limbs at the Day of Judgement, the hind-quarters won't be on parade, that's certain. Why! what... the... devil has been doing?"

But suddenly, like a flash of lightning, a new idea went through his head, and mounting his horse with an oath, he galloped into camp.

"Wretch!" he shouted the instant he caught sight of Jacobot, deeply absorbed in polishing up a camp-kettle, "wretch! what was it you gave the Non-Coms for supper last night, you atrocious pig, you? — and us, for breakfast this morning?"

"Pig, pig,..." mumbled the drunkard, who had been indulging in big bumpers of the wine just arrived, "it wasn't so piggish, when they were licking their thumbs just now right up to their elbows!"

"Seize the fellow, and tie him up!" shrieked the Commandant, choking with disgust and fury. Then, turning to the Officers, Quartermasters and Corporals, who came running up from all sides: "Do you know *what* it was the wretch gave us all to eat? *do* you know? Fricassée à la Mother Fortenpoil! By God, was it! The abandoned villain! Fricassée à la Mother Fortenpoil!!"

* *

"A good wife too, she was," the widower will say sometimes to this day, with a sigh. He is now a well-to-do innke-eper at Bona, landlord of a fine hotel and the happy possessor of a new land-lady, a young and pretty woman; a good wife too, she is, — but a bit of a scold.

And he generally finishes his narrative, — one he never fails to tell his customers, when he is in a good humour, in these terms:

"Yes! those little meat-pies were very good indeed, and the fricassée too, they say. Pooh! my boys! It's a way we have in the Army, to make up for *short commons*!"

IX

MERZOUG — AND HIS EQUIVALENT

IX

MERZOUG — AND HIS EQUIVALENT

I

He was a black stallion of the Ouled-Nails [1], the Tribe that is so prolific in thoroughbreds, — both mares and maids. From the lake of Saïda to Cons-

1. Pronounced *Walad-Nails*.

tantine, from Bordj-bou-Arreridj to La Calle, every householder, or rather "tent-holder", and every *entrepreneuse*, is keen to procure the offspring of the land of Palms. Same opulence of breast, same fineness of shape, same luxuriance of mane, and in their gazelle-like eyes, same fire and softness. The tresses on their brow are the horseman's love and pride, whether bestriding the devourer of space he scours the plain to the time of the ringing stirrup-iron, or whether reposing on the bosom of the devourer of hearts, he falls softly asleep to the tinkle, tinkle of the silver bracelets shaken by the fondling hand.

For it is written in the legends of the *Tell* :

"The only Earthly Paradise there is, is the back of a horse of race, or the lips of the beloved.'

Again our poets sing :

> The gallop of the war-horse
> And the tinkle of a woman's ear-rings
> Drive the maggots from your head.

His coat, "now iridescent like a pigeon's wing in the shadow, or blue-black like the raven's in the sun," was never dulled by the foul exhalations of a stable, nor polluted by the contact of the curry-comb the Roumis make such excessive use of in

what they term *rubbing-down* their beasts, as ignorant of the true hygiene of the horse as a lot of Khabyle foot-men. Sound in wind and limb, without spot or blemish, proud and strong, the noble stallion Merzoug [1] knew no roof at night but the starry vault of heaven.

1. More exactly *marzouk*, if examined etymologically. The root is "razaka" which according to W. T. Wortabet's admirable *Arabic English Dict.* (Beyrout, 1893), means "to grant; to bestow upon; to provide the necessaries of life (God)", the secondary meaning of *marzouk*, or *merzoug* being "happy", "fortunate". It is a noteworthy fact that the Bedawin never gives a name borne by a man to his horse, although the latter may be, and often is more precious to him than any man. The reason is to be found in religion, which dominates the whole of the Arab's life. The names of men have been borne by the Saints of al-Islam, and it would be an enormous sin, a sacrilege without qualification, to apply to a mere animal the names of those who have battled in the cause of Allah and the Faith.

The thoroughbred of the desert has from remote times been famed amongst *connaisseurs* for elegance of body and swiftness of foot. The secret is to be found in the purity of the race and, what we may term their *pre-natal training*.

The stallion is led to the mare in the first days of Spring, so that the foal may have before it at least two seasons to obtain the strength necessary to enable it to support the rigours of the winter.

The moment when the mare desires the stallion is recognized by her urinating as soon as she hears him neigh, when she discharges a whitish fluid, and then lowers her

The Caïd Salah ben Omar, at the head of one of our *goums*, had carried him off in one of the frequent raids from the Djebel-Sahari, — occasions

head and turns it round to listen to his coming. Before bringing the mare to the stallion, it is proper to diminish her provender, and the night preceding her being covered, no food at all is given her; which is said to cause her to conceive better and more quickly. If it is thought necessary to excite the heat of the mare, she must be sent to graze in company with a small fiery horse, who by playing with her, biting and teasing, excites her ardour and brings her up to point. Friday is the day preferred for getting the mare covered; it is the Moslem sabbath, and is supposed to bring luck. Either from a sentiment of modesty, or in order not to disturb the attention of the stallion, he is always made to cover the mare far away from the tents. The mare is placed on an inclined plane. The horse has only a halter, and is held by the tether; one man draws aside the mare's tail, whilst another guides the stallion's member.

The Arabs prefer the guided covering to the covering at liberty, on account of the accidents which may occur in the latter case. For instance, it is not rare for the stallion to thrust his member between the mare's thighs and injure himself; or else he introduces it into the rectum, thereby causing the death of the mare. Besides the horse exhausts himself far more when he mounts in liberty.

The covering of the mare is done in the early morning in order to avoid the heat; and it is entirely dispensed with when the air is overcharged with the big flies the Arabs call *debabe*. They annoy the animal, sting him till blood flows, and are supposed to deposit beneath the skin their eggs, which at first appear to create no disturbance, but

when our men, after killing a sufficient number of men and cattle, fired the *ksours* and cut down the date-palms to teach the natives of the oases the

which bring about the death of the horse when the cold first sets in, or when the snow begins to fall.

When about to present the stallion to the mare, says General Daumas, walk him round about her, let him smell her, then, when he is sufficiently in heat, lead him away, and do not let him mount until you see him spill a whitish fluid. Otherwise you would expose him to ejaculate on merely touching the mare. As soon as the act is terminated, one should, if possible, wash the stallion, and give him afterwards a good feed of barley. The mare must be walked about gently after giving three or four slaps with the flat of the hand below the flanks. Some people, thinking to help conception hasten also to make her an application of *henna* to the abdominal tunic.

The stallion that does not produce is one whose member is not long enough to reach the orifice of the mare's womb, or whose sperm is liquid, but little white and without consistency. The Arabs, in order to make sure of it, heat a stallion together with a mare until he is brought to that point which permits them to note the quality of his sperm.

It is known if the mare has conceived, when, after having been covered, she turns her head round to view her flanks; there is no doubt at all of the fact, if, at the end of seven days, on being presented again to the stallion, she presses her tail down tight and repels him with vigorous kicks, or if she no longer spends that whitish fluid which she used to at the approach of the male or at the sound of his neighing.

When a mare will not conceive, she is forced to make a

rules of civilization. The colt was hardly a month old, and on the long marches, when he could not follow, the Caïd would hoist the little creature on his mule.

Thus he made one of the family. He had grown up a playmate of all the youngsters of the *douar*, the companion of all their gambols. Perched on his back, without saddle or bridle, they would take him after a long day's work to drink and bathe at the falls of the Oued-Mellegue.

rapid and long gallop, she is then brought to the stallion, breathless and covered with sweat, her two forelegs plunged in a brook. If she was supposed to be barren, it would then be necessary to give her a tall ass (*masery*); she will give birth to a mule and become useful for reproduction.

The Arabs have other methods for combating the sterility of the mare: a man anoints his arm with butter soap or oil, he penetrates into the vagina of the mare, reaches to the neck of the womb which he slightly opens by means of a date held between his extended fingers, and finally manages to introduce his entire hand; he then, after withdrawing his arm, presents the stallion. The mare conceives, for she was but tied (*maagouda*). This operation requires the greatest precautions, and he who practises it must be careful to cut his finger nails quite short. Would it not be a curious thing if the Arabs were to show us the way to a precious discovery in medical science?

See *Les chevaux du Sahara et les mœurs du désert* (Paris, 1858).

All loved him and petted him; he was the pride of the whole Tribe. The Caïd's wives gave him his barley, used to saddle and bridle him, and at evening when he returned from a journey the youngest would wipe his face with her *haïk*.

But one morning, oh! day for ever accursed, just as the dawn was whitening the plain, there rose a great cry in the *douar* :

" Merzoug? where is Merzoug? "

The cry came from the women first a-foot in the *douar*; then from the seventy tents of the Beni-Rahan rose answering shouts of dismay :

" Stolen! Merzoug is stolen! "

Yes! in very deed he had been stolen, — in the black midnight, at the Caïd's own tent-door, where he always stood picketed with a double shackle, stolen right in the very midst of the camp, with dogs and watchmen on every side, and in spite of the leather scapularies, — *heurouse aâdjam*, — holy talismans on which are inscribed the charms and magic formulas that preserve the beasts from colics, from strangles, farcy and footsoreness, from foundering and robbers.

In vain the men of the Beni-Rahan, anxious to avenge the insult and make good the loss, visited

every corner of the plain, making adroit enquiries in the *douars* of the Nememchas, the Chaouias, and even the Ouarghas on the far side of the Oued. In vain men were charged to go round the markets of the Meskiana, Ain-Beida, El-Meridj and Roum-el-Souk, crying amid the groups of market-people :

" Salutation to all Good Men ! Oh, yes ! Mussulmans all ! Whosoever shall bring home to the folk of the Beni-Rahan the stallion of My Lord Salah ben Omar, the Caïd, he shall win the lovingkindness of God that loveth the doer of a good deed, and he shall be rewarded in the sum of a hundred *douros* ! Tell the news to all and sundry. Oh, yes ! Oh, yes ! "

But there was no answer. In spite of the reward offered, which was more than sufficient to tempt the cupidity of the frontier-robbers and excite their reckless daring, no one succeeded even so far as to discover in what *douar* the noble Merzoug was hidden away.

Finally, notwithstanding his repugnance to have the *Bureau Arabe* mixed up at all in his affairs, the Caïd had to invoke assistance in that quarter ; but all he got was the rough answer :

" Keep a better eye on your horses ! "

II

Meanwhile an old woman of the Nememchas affirmed that on the night of the theft she had seen at daybreak, as she was getting ready to grind the day's corn, a naked rider on a black horse heading at a gallop for the tents of the Ouchtatas.

The Ouchtatas, as everybody knows now that recent events have made us all familiar with the maps of the Tunisian frontier, did not as a rule come down so far into the valley of the Oued-Mellegue. But it was the period of the tax-assessment, and the Tribe was in flight before the Bey s troops, hordes of half-starved, poverty stricken wretches who had only these annual raids to trust to for their war pay, — their wages in time of peace having long ago been reduced to zero.

Thus a section of the Tribe had scattered over the Southern valleys, driving their flocks and herds before them, dragging their camels and mules laden with baggage, tents and provisions along with them; while the Tunisian soldiery having reached the lower spurs of the fertile mountain region inhabited by the Eastern Khabyles, since known

under the name of the Kroumirs, made halt there for a time, devouring like a cloud of locusts what the fugitives had been obliged to leave behind.

These latter were encamped two or three gunshots from the river, and from the bastions of the Fort of El-Meridj we could see the fires in their *douars*. Day after day hidden in the clumps of oleander, we watched their women, old and young, on their way to the river to draw water. Generally men armed with long muskets formed an escort; but either because they were busy elsewhere, or because they had to guard their flocks against the thievish Ouled bou Ghanem, it happened four times out of ten that the women came unaccompanied within our range.

Then we would show ourselves, and hail them and throw them kisses. The young women would laugh, while their elders would fly in a passion and overwhelm us with abuse :

" You dogs! you dogs! you vile Christian dogs! you spawn of hell! Go to, get yourselves circumcised, before you dare to look at unveiled women. You filthy Roumi dogs! Ah, ha! your day will come! and the ravens shall pick out your eyes and the jackals gnaw your bones! "

Things were at this pass one day when the Caïd Salah rode past quite near us, escorted by a single horseman. The Bureau Arabe at Tebessa had shown him the door, and so he was coming to relate his tale of woe to the Commandant of the *Bordj*.

" Ho! children of the Devil, " he cried to us in a tone of good-humoured amusement, " why! what have you done to make the blear-eyed beauties so furious? "

So saying, he dismounted, and sitting down in the middle of us, accepted a cigarette, scrutinizing as he smoked it, one by one, the women of the Ouchtatas with his vulture's eye. Amongst them were some lovely girls, young and fresh as a May morning, maidens just barely marriageable, whom twelve or fifteen summer-suns at most had kissed.

Two in particular charmed us, two sisters with the same sweet, gentle faces and soft, graceful figures. We pointed them out to the Caïd, while they gazed at us from afar with great shy, startled eyes.

" By the head of my father, " muttered Salah in his beard, " Paradise has opened one of its gates; and two *houris* have slipped out. "

He scrutinized them like a connoisseur for a long time without saying a word, then turning round to his *Daïra*, seated a few paces behind him, holding the horses' bridles :

" Look ! " he said. " From the salt lakes to the sea, did you ever behold fairer maidens? "

" My eyes are dazzled with their loveliness, " returned the other.

" Look once more, that you may know them again. "

" Their image is in my heart, and will never fade. "

" Now, to horse ! "

We went along with the Caïd to the Fort.

" Well ! if it is the Ouchtatas who have stolen your stallion, " the Commandant told him, " you may give up all idea of ever seeing him again. Why ! what weight can we bring to bear on them ? We are not allowed to pass the frontier. "

" The foul Fiend grip me by the feet in mid career, as I charge upon the foe, if I do not recover my own ! There is nothing I will not do, — nothing ! Know you not how the men of the neighbouring Tribes make a mock of me. They say, " Salah-ben-Omar is getting old, and the men of

his *douar* sleep as sound as women after the delights of love. Two steps away from the mat where he slept, they stole his war-horse from him! " I tell you he is the very Prince of stallions; you cannot match him in all the six squadrons of your Spahis. Again and again, in the grand raids of the *Souf*, has he covered his eighty leagues in the four and twenty hours, — saddle on back for weeks and months on end, and not a thing to crop during the brief halts but the leaves of the dwarf palms! Oh! Merzoug! Merzoug! my brother, my son! my comrade in days of peril! What! you say I am never more to hear my good beast shake himself, when I have dismounted from his back, with clang of stirrup-iron and clash of sword and tinkle of the silver crescent on his red head-stall, that the youngest of my wives broidered for him! Even as I stand here detailing you my grievances, another man is on his back, insulting my peerless Merzoug! "

" What would you have me do for you? "

" Commandant, give me a free hand! Do not interfere; and I will soon prove there are as clever thieves among the Ouled-Rahan as ever the Ouchtatas can boast! "

" I never doubted the fact, " replied the Commandant, with a laugh; " but what do you mean by your phrase, ' Give me a free hand. ' "

" An idea struck me just now as I rode along, and I think it is a brilliant one. Give me leave to go down with a few horsemen to the river on a day I shall select, and I warrant I find my horse. "

" Find your horse! Why! is the thief so bold he takes him to water at the Oued Mellegue? — I give you full permission and a free hand; but mind, no firing, whatever you do! Remember this, and don't get me into difficulties with the Tunisian tribes. "

" By the head of the Prophet, I swear there shall not be a grain of powder burnt; I swear not a sword shall leave its scabbard. Allah abandon me to my fate in fight, there betwixt friend and foe, if you meet vexation or annoyance in this matter by me! "

III

A week later, and there was a quite unusual stir in the *douar* of Caïd Salah-ben-Omar. Something unwonted, something strange and exciting, was doing.

A crowd of thirty or forty men pressed round the *dar-diaf*, (public guest-tent), talking loudly, pushing and gesticulating, like a mob of drunken Roumis lost to all sence of dignity and self-respect.

There were men of all ages, some old and some quite young; beards snow white and beards iron-gray, black beards and beardless chins just shaded by manly down.

There was much wrangling, amid which were audible such phrases as these :

" I tell you it is my turn now. "

" By the face of Allah, why am I to give up my place to you? "

" The Almighty empty your saddle, young Sir! I was at the wars, when you were still a brat, hanging at your mother's breast! "

" You are in the wrong, — you own it yourself. Shame! shame! Begone, and leave young men their own. Your wives shout after you to claim their rights. Can't you hear them, they say : " Ho! thief! thief! He is robbing us of our share, — a poor thing at best! "

" Silence! What have wives to do with it? This is loot; it is common property... "

" Back, beardless boys; make room for your elders ! "

" Love is for the young ! "

" No ! for the old first ! They cannot wait, their hours are numbered.

" Ho ! Caïd ! I appeal. "

" Peace, my children ! The fruit is cut. What matters for the second or the twentieth slice, so long as their is a slice for all ? "

But it was only for a few minutes they obeyed the old Caïd's voice. Very soon a new dispute broke out, and the pushing and confusion began afresh.

Now and again sultry puffs of heated air blew past, that seemed to issue from the mouth of a furnace; and penetrating the heady languor that hung over the crowd, there ran sudden, keen breaths of brutal concupiscence, a wind ofbestial lust that shivered down the spine and urged naked flesh to be rubbing against naked flesh.

And panting, pushing, mouths watering, and eyes on fire, they besieged the tent, from the recesses of which came the sound of cries and moans of pain. At intervals a man would come out, his place being instantly taken by another.

Four *Deïras*, in blue burnouses, armed with heavy bludgeons, kept back the women from the scene of action[1]. But this did not prevent their howling forth a continuous stream of furious abuse, drowning with shrill cries and screams of anger the men's shouts.

" Ah! the abominables brutes! the dogs! the accursed dogs! They are dogs, you can see them at dogs' work. "

" We will appeal for divorce. "

" Yes! but how can we trust to the Caïd's doing us justice? "

1. Nothing can be more foul than this violation of girls and children, a common feature of barbarous life. Let not the " civilized " man however, " lay the flattering unction to his soul " that these things are done better in Christian Europe. The " dailies " constantly publish half-stifled records of the raping of child or maid, oft-times under the very shadow of the church-tower and the magistrate's court. At the time of writing a Catholic priest is accused at Trouville (March, 1899) of having committed OVER TWO HUNDRED CRIMES AGAINST DECENCY. According, to the report, his victims were little girls from 8 to 12 years of age. We prefer not to sully our pens with too exact a recital of the immodest doings of this most immodest monster, suffice to say that under pretence of giving the children a whipping he took advantage of their nudity to handle them in an ignoble manner and inculcate their infant minds with practices rarely met with outside the pages of Martial.

"The Caïd is a man; he is on their side. He will back them, and put us in the wrong."

"Ruffian! from henceforth your bed shall be made on the left hand, and I will spread mine to the right, — with a saddle betwixt us!"

"In the very crisis of love's delight, may Eblis the Damned (Satan) bite you in the back. May you encounter a sharp thorn in your bed, when you would fain lie with your wife."

Other women, the young girls these, cried:

"Poor *toflas* (damsels)! why should they suffer? They are not Roumis' daughters. They are Arabs, and worship the true God, like us."

"Go to, foolish girls! do you think they suffer?"

"Do you not hear their cries of pain?"

"It is pleasure makes them cry out!"

It was the old women who answered so, and they gave an evil laugh, as they said it. After years of suffering, when faith and hope are alike dead, there is no pity left in a woman's heart.

So, ugly, bony and repulsive, with long skinny thighs and dangling, blackened breasts, with skin shrivelled in the wind stiff and hard as well worn leather, and faces burnt up by the suns of sixty

summers, they stood tapping their fingers on their mouth and rousing the echoes of the Bou-Djaber with the merry *staccato* cry dedicated to times of festivity and days of marriage!

" Up! up! young folk; up and away! Up! up gather up the good things God sends the poor. Yu! yu! yu! yu! yu! yu! "

But when they stopped to take breath, and there was a moment of silence, piercing screams of agony were heard in answer from the *dar-diaf*.

It was about five of the afternoon. The setting sun glanced gaily over the inequalities of the plain, darting flames here, casting long shadows there, dyeing the tents with their brown and yellow stripes a uniform purple, gilding ragged cloaks and dingy burnouses, lighting up silken *haïks*, flashing on blue and white robes, making rings and brooches and bracelets of copper sparkle, gleaming on the handles of *flissas*, the barrels of muskets, on the steel of stirrups and the embroidered work of saddles, throwing showers of gold and rubies on all these gewgaws of war and peace, of plenty and poverty

IV

An Officer of Spahis, following the road from Tebessa to El-Meridj, that passes within a half gun-shot of the *douar*, had his attention attracted by the tumult.

He questioned the native horseman, serving him at once in the capacities of Orderly, Interpreter and guide.

The latter listened, with outstretched neck and one hand shading his eyes; then indifferently :

" Oh! nothing; " he said, " only some woman or other being violated. "

The officer was young, fresh from the mill of the Military College.

Utterly unfamiliar as he was with Arab manners and customs, and innocent of one word of Arabic, he had been appointed Sub-Lieutenant of Spahis. It is quite as much to the ignorance of young Officers, — and of old Officers too for the matter of that, — men who know nothing whatever about Africa, as to the inefficiency of Functionaries, who whether high or low know still less, that the

ruin of Algeria will be due, — a ruin that must come, failing some drastic remedies.

His Interpreter expressed himself in that strange Cosmopolitan jargon known as *Petit-Sabir*; and the young Officer thought he must have misunderstood the answer, and repeated his question. " Yes! a woman being violated! " the Spahi repeated, quite distinctly.

Then, listening again, bending forward in his saddle with excited eyes and twitching, widely opened nostrils :

" It is a girl, " added the Arab, — " perhaps more than one .....Something like amusement going on yonder! " — the last part of the sentence with a regretful sigh.

" What! what! Women are ravished publicly, in broad daylight, in this country! " cried the Officer indignantly, urging his horse toward the *douar*.

" Stop! stop, Sir! " shouted the guide; " the *douar* belongs to the Beni-Rahan. Better not go there. They are mere savages; and love not to see strangers intermeddling in their business. "

But the Officer would not hear a word, and only drove in his spurs the harder.

The Spahi followed him at a gallop, shouting warnings all the time :

" Listen, Sir! listen to me! by your own head and mine, listen to me! You have not a beard on your chin. Only an experienced Officer, one who knows the Arabs, could venture what you are doing. What are you going to say to them? Why! you cannot even speak our language. They will not understand what you mean. True, I will translate your words, but indignation, however fierce, that passes by another man's mouth, loses all its force, especially coming from a mere child. You must pardon me, Sir! but indeed they will take you for a child. They may respect the lace on your cap and the gold braid on your sleeve, but they will not respect *you*. "

The Officer did not hear a word; he was already close to the tents. A score of savage dogs darted forward, barking furiously at the strangers. Some of them tried to bite the horses' legs; others, fiercer still, leapt stirrup-high to tear the rider's boot.

" Ho! there, you of the *douar*! Call off your dogs, fellows!."

The men looked round, and the women ceased their cries, while ten or a dozen Bedouins came

slowly forward to confront the intruders, warning off the dogs with shouts and gestures.

" What is going on here? " demanded the Sub-Lieutenant haughtily, rolling his eyes and making his voice big.

They looked him up and down from head to foot, — the beardless boy, with his arrogant look, his white face and yellow hair, — like a wench of the Ouled-Aidoun [1].

" The roads are free to all, " they answered presently. " When we marked you yonder riding along the highway, not one of us even thought of leaving our *douar* to come and shout at you, ' Whither away? ' So you too can go by in peace, without troubling your head about our business. Now, march! If you would reach the Fort before nightfall, you must push your horse! "

But the stripling, pale with anger at their insolence, turned to his Interpreter, saying :

" Tell them I belong to the *Bureau Arabe*; tell them they must speak more politely to me. "

" We respect the Department; " returned one of the older men; " but why do they bring over from France children at the breast to govern men?

1. A Khabyle Tribe.

Bearded men for bearded men! Who ever heard tell of things going right, when babes give orders to old men. Dismount, my son, if you will. If you are hungry and thirsty, and your joints stiff with riding, follow me to my tent, and welcome! But if curiosity is your motive, go on your way! go on your way! I myself sometimes visit the towns of the Franks, and I hear their women wrangling. Or mayhap one *Mercanti* says to another, ' You thief, ' and the other retorts, " Bankrupt you, and your father bankrupt before you! ' Many a time they are drunk and begin to fight. But I, — I go about my business, and never turn my head. Roumis' quarrels do not concern Arabs, nor yet Arabs' quarrels Roumis. You have not learned even to spell the divine Koran, or you would have seen these words written there. Now, begone! "...

The young Officer was no coward, and a healthy curiosity urged him to persevere. Disregarding the warnings of his Guide and the threatening attitude of the tribesmen, he dismounted, and with the sublime courage of ignorance and inexperience pushed his way through the hostile crowd, repeating the only Arabic word he knew, — from having heard it at every step in the streets of Constantine:

" Balek! balek! Make way! make way! " adding further :

" Bureau Arabe! Bureau Arabe!"

He draped himself, as it were, in this name, knowing the terror it inspires; and as a matter of fact all fell back before him.

Still there were some at sight of his white face, ready to block his way. They stood with flashing eyes consulting each others' faces; and if one had said, ' Strike, ' ten would have gone further and cried, ' Kill! ' And they would certainly have struck, every man of them. They only waited a sign ; but the sign was not made.

On the contrary, the Caïd, who was seated at the threshold of his tent calmly telling his beads, — he took care not to make himself conspicuous, for fear of compromising himself, should matters turn out ill, — the Caïd now lifted his voice and said :

" Let be, my children, let be! True, he will tell what he has seen. But what matter? *We* do not make our hearts crooked to dissemble our purposes; we raise no screen to hide our acts. Soul for soul is our motto, and eye for eye; nose for nose, ear for ear, tooth for tooth. The Department

answered me, ' Keep a better eye on your horses. Very well! the Department, to be fair, will answer the Ouchtatas, ' Keep a better eye on your girls, you! ' Every man must needs look to his own "

And a Sheikh, with a pepper and salt beard added :

" The Arab and the dog are brothers in this! He is poor; he finds what he can, and picks up what he finds. Often it is but broken scraps, bones gnawed already; well! he gnaws them again, and makes no complaint. Lo! to-day they are tasty, there is flesh on the bones; and he takes his fill, and makes no great ado..... Leave us alone! "

" Deuce take me if I can understand one single word of all your harangues! " returned the young Officer. " Come now, make way! "

They let him come close up. A young man standing by the tent even went so far as obligingly to lift a corner of the canvas.....revealing a scene he who saw it is never like to forget.

V

At first, in the twilight of the interior, he could make out nothing but vague, confused shapes. But very soon the horrors of the place became visible.

On the floor of the tent was the usual palm-tree mat; on this, a woollen cushion under the loins, lay extended a young girl, as naked as mother Eve.

Her mouth was half open, and showed the dazzling line of the white teeth, while her black hair lay tossed about in confusion, as if clutching hands had shaken her head this way and that. The great dark eyes were glazed, staring vacantly into space.

The Officer thought she was dead at first, her body lay so stiff and rigid; but presently he observed that her breasts, — breasts on which the ancient cup of Classical story might have been moulded, — rose and fell in jerks, and one of her legs shuddered in nervous tension with a quick, spasmodic twitching.

Pale of face and sick at heart, the haunting op-

pression of a nightmare weighing on his senses, he could not take his eyes off the childish form, — for she was hardly more than a child. He could not believe he saw the torn and tortured victim of the savage lust of these monsters. Horror, pity, anger were striving for the mastery in his bosom, when suddenly there rose the sound of agonised sobs :

" Baba ! ia baba ! ia Sidi ! (Father ! O my father ! O my Lord !)

Then he looked again, and saw a little further off, pushed into a corner and propped up against a saddle, another slip of a girl, smaller and slimmer and even more graceful than the first. Naked like her, her body stained and torn like hers, her eye wild and terrified, she crouched there, waiting... And in her terror and consternation, she kept on repeating at intervals her cry for help, her desperate appeal to her absent father :

" Baba ! ia baba ! Sidi ! "

And she wept, and wept, as only a child can.

" Come now ! " said a voice behind him, " make your choice. Take your share, if you will, — the share of the *Bureau Arabe* ! You are quite entitled to it. "

" Let the girls alone, " vociferated the Officer, frantic with indignation; " let the poor girls alone! Cowards! blackguards! murderers! " and drew his sword.

The blade flashed in the air; but at the same moment he was surrounded, seized, disarmed, pushed, carried, set on his saddle again. Then, respectfully, one of the old men returned him his weapon, reiterating what he had been told before:

" Go your way! the roads are free to all, but the *douars* of the Beni-Rahan belong to the Beni-Rahan. "

" Then they belong to criminals and ruffians, " the young man retorted furiously. " You are a horde of savages, who ravish young children! In common justice you should be swept from the face of the earth with fire and sword; and you shall be. You have earned your death, and death you shall have[1]! "

1. Rape, defined in law to be « the carnal knowledge of a woman by force and against her will", Stevenson (*Medical Jurisprudence*) states, has considerably increased since the CAPITAL SENTENCE once meted out for it, has been abolished. French novels are full of cases of rape and the medico-legal archives dealing with this kind of " amusement " form most instructive reading. Dr L. Thoinot, Fellow and Professor of the Paris Medical Faculty, and one of the

The Caïd's voice made itself heard through the rout :

" You are young, " he said, " and you do not

greatest medical ex perts in France, has dealt with this crime in a very clear and comprehensive way. We think it not inappropriate to quote from his magisterial *Attentats aux Mœurs*, wherein he demonstrates the circumstances under which, advantage is taken of the female.

Tardieu, he points out, has noted in his practice **80** cases of rape on girls of from **15** to **20** years old, and **10** only on girls above that age. The crime of rape committed on a nubile virgin may be accomplished in two distinctly different ways : (I) The girl is in full possession of her will, of her consciousness. (II) The girl has been *naturally* or *artificially* deprived of her free will. We could write a comprehensive chapter on the conditions under which rape has been committed on girls or women deprived of their free will, but we shall here treat only of ordinary rape, that commited on a girl while *thoroughly conscious*.

It goes without saying, that whatever the conditions under which the crime has been accomplished, *the physical signs of defloration* remain quite the same.

There is however a question which first of all presents itself : *Is rape possible on an adult girl, in full possession of her will and of her consciousness*? This question cannot be answered in full : here it is necessary to examine the nature of the case. A rape is easily committed when *several individuals* combine to attack a girl, and such cases are far from rare. Rape on the contrary attempted by a solitary individual, on a *vigorous girl, knowing very well what is wanted of her* and not consenting to it, seems *a priori* to be impossible.

know. But I tell you there are men of my tribe, and their beard is not grey yet, who have seen their own mother's daughters made the plaything

In fact a very few movements of the girl's pelvis executed by her to impede the intromission of the virile member will suffice " To artful girls, said Voltaire, who come to complain of having been violated, the tale should be related of how a certain Queen once rejected an accusation of the kind brought to her by a woman. She drew a sword from its scabbard and handing it to the woman, requested her to put it back again into the scabbard, which she found it impossible to do, the Queen moving it about continually"

As a fact this sort of rape is very rare and difficult to accomplish, but it is not impossible and may be effected under certain circumstances which we shall now examine :

(a) It may be that the girl, vigorous and in full possession of her consciousness, finds herself in a condition of *absolute physical impossibility* to offer any opposition to the rape, and that she assists powerless at the crime being commited upon her.

Hofmann has published three very curious cases of the kind, which will serve to illustrate these circumstances.

The first is borrowed from Berndt : a young peasant girl had just finished making up a very heavy bundle of grass and had wrapped it up in a sheet. That done, she threw herself backwards, her back against the bundle, and passed her arms into two arm-straps attached to the sheet, in order to lift her bundle. The situation may be imagined; at this moment she is surprised by an individual who violated her while she was in that position and unable to make the least resistance.

The second case is related by Maschka : a young girl had

of your country's soldiery. The Caïd Salah-ben-Omar remembers seeing his sisters' faces. They were but children, no older than he; but the

allowed herself so to speak to be bundled up in a cart, between some straw and a feather bed, and in that situation was obliged to submit to coition against her will.

Thet hird case is equally instructive. A peas antgirl allowed herself out of fun to be tied by her playmates in the following fashion : the hands fastened together beneath her knees, a stick was then passed between her arms and her bent knees, and there she remained like a trussed fowl, unable to make the slightest movement. Her comrades then ran away leaving her in that position and commissioned an individual to go and release her; but he took advantage of her helpless condition and violated her, accomplishing coition from behind, *more canum*.

(*b*) A man alone may sometimes reduce a vigorous girl, although she may have the free use of her hands and feet, to the impossibility of defending herself. The following case related by Casper will thoroughly explain our meaning :

L... enticed into a park the girl P..., *adult and in good health*. There, seizing suddenly hold of her, he in a moment threw her on her back, at the same lifting her clothes over her head, and putting it thus out of her power to resist, he violated her.

(*c*) It may also happen that the girl resists, and resists vigorously for a certain time; but at last exhausted by the struggle, and overcome by the brutality of her aggression, she finally gives way. Unable to continue her resistance any longer, rendered powerless, she assists at the crime perpetrated upon her. The student will find very many more instances in *The Ethnology of the Sixth Sense* (2 vols, Paris, 1899), where this subject is comprehensively han-

"blue greatcoats" worked their wicked will on them, and then ripped them up. And if he escaped himself to tell the tale, it was only that he slipped away from the thrusting bayonets, and was so small they could not find him in the thicket where he cowered [1]. Recrimination is not in his way ; but

dled. This work, by the able author of *Untrodden Fields of Anthropology*, is probably the most extraordinary work in English, or any other language, treating of the Crimes Anomalies and Perversions of what Dr Jacobus calls the "Sixth (or Genital) Sense". The following occurrence does not seem to fall under any of Dr Thoinot's classifications. Some ten or twelve years ago a case was recorded in the French newspapers of a rape committed on a strong and vigorous girl, a milk-maid, in a field. Her aggressor, unable to conquer her resistance, suddenly seized her, two ankles and lifting up her legs as high as he could, and putting them on his shoulders, got between them and perpetrated the crime, she being then quite powerless.

1. Some day the long tale of the rapes and violences of military history will be written down apart as a curious chapter in the book of civilisation. The history of rape is in fact the history of humanity. In the *Ethnology of the Sixth Sense* by a French Army-surgeon, a case is noted of a woman at Bazeilles who was violated by SEVENTEEN SOLDIERS! From Bazeilles to Bengal is a far cry, but the rumours of the excesses of the black mutineers — high-born ladies ridden naked through the Bazaars and made to undergo unimaginable horrors — did not fail to reach the ears of their white avengers and this will account, in part, for the thorough way in which they did their duty.

remember, when the Bedouins bleed their neighbours, they have been bled well nigh to death themselves. But anyway, what have you to complain about? it is none of yours they are bleeding now!"

VI

The hour of the evening prayer was just over, and the men of the Beni-Rahan, who had duly prostrated themselves towards the East as the fiery disc of the sun glided below the towering crests of the Bou-Djaber, were rising and slowly re-entering their tents. Here and there shrill voices rose in fierce invective, and from time to time grave, commanding tones were heard saying, "Peace, you women! Peace!" In some tents there were sounds of weeping.

Presently, little by little, silence settled down on the *douar*.

Several grey shadows glided towards the Caïd's tent; and there was a whispered colloquy within. Meantime not far off, beside the *Dar-Diaf* (Guest-Tent), men were arranging long branches of

laurel in order on the ground, trimming them with pruning-knives and cutting all to the same length.

Darkness crept over the camp like a mourning-veil. In the distance fires shone out in all directions; while the horrid yelping of the jackals rose amid the gloom, and from all the *douars* scattered here and there on the wide plain, dogs answered with loud barking.

Suddenly the "long-rope", on which the mares of the Beni-Rahan were shackled, shook from end to end.

The beasts one and all tossed up their heads sharply, drawing deep breaths of the wind, as it blew by; then nervous and restless, twitching as at the cracking of a whip, stamping and scenting the ground, they tore the silence of the night to tatters with their volleying neighs. Instantly the whole *douar* was astir.

"It is he! it is he!" they cried.

And stepping out beyond the circle of the tents, silencing the dogs with stones and sticks, men peered into the outer darkness, listening eagerly. Some lay down full length and put their ear to the ground.

"By the head of the Prophet, 't is he! Is it good or is it evil he brings us on his back?"

A far-off neigh made merry answer to the mares' challenge; and soon the thunderous hoofs of a *Devourer of Space* were heard beating the earth.

Young men leapt to the beasts' heads, for they were struggling hard to break their shackles, and the *douar* shouted with one voice:

"Merzoug! Merzoug! Merzoug!"

Then through the dark loomed the mighty frame of the stallion.

Men, women, children, greeted him with exclamations of joy, and for several minutes together the echoes of the Bou-Djaber gave back the name:

"Merzoug! Merzoug!"

A white-bearded horseman rode him bare-backed. At some paces from the tents he slipped to the ground, and holding the charger by a rope halter, cried, as soon as the tumult was hushed:

"Greeting to all! Men of the Beni-Rahan, I bring you the horse of the Caïd Si-Salah-ben-Omar."

"Thief," they replied, "you are welcome, —

welcome, spite of the wanton affront you have put upon us. They of the Chaouias and the Nememchas are laughing still; they say : "Ah, ha! those Beni-Rahan; they had the prince of all war-horses, and they let him be stolen under their noses. The charger who saved his master in the fight, his master could not save from robbers! "Sheikh, you are clever, clever! Greeting to you!"

"Accuse me not," returned the old Sheikh, "of what I am not guilty. If I am to blame, you may cut off my hands. But indeed they are innocent of theft. To have tried and done such a deed required the address and daring of the young. The colour of my beard must convince you it was beyond my powers, without my needing to swear it on the tomb of the Prophet. Yet have I to pay for other men's ill-doing, — and pay heavily. To redeem the horse, I have given a hundred *douros*, my whole fortune; I have sold my wives' bracelets to grasping Jews and their very silver *khelalas*[1]. Long I begged and prayed; more than once they threatened to set the dogs on me. The thief is one of the Ouled-bou-Ghanem."

1. *Khelalas*, — brooches fastening the women's dress at the shoulder.

"His name?"

"I cannot give his name. Silence on this point was one of the conditions of our bargain."

"And is it not written : 'Take not your oaths in vain, as a means unto deceit?"

"And now, Beni-Rahan, give me back my daughters."

His voice was trembling, as he said it.

Then the Caïd Salah-ben-Omar, who had just completed a careful examination of his horse by the light of a fire of dry twigs and had found not a scratch upon him, came forward, his heart divided between satisfaction and regret, and addressed the Sheikh :

"You have tarried long, Sir! For a month I have waited patiently; for a whole month I said each evening, "To-morrow he will be here!" The other day, weary of waiting, I warned the women of the Ouchtatas, when I went to the river and culled your daughters like two water-lilies; I warned them, saying : "Lo! I give their father twice four-and-twenty hours. After that, tell him he need be at no pains to find them husbands!" Then I bethought me, and I granted another day, the fourth, — at dawn, though my

young men were wild with impatience. For we must ever be merciful. Yea ! I waited yet another day. We are now at the sixth day ; and it is three hours since the sun disappeared yonder, behind the peak of the Bou-Djaber. By dint of hacking, the sword has touched the bone. "

" What mean you ? " exclaimed the old man, and two big tears slipped down his deeply-lined cheeks. " Where are my girls ? Why do they not come to greet me ? Why do not their fair, gentle faces beam through the night and gladden a father's eyes ? By the Lord of the Hour, answer me, Caïd ! "

" For six days they have been calling you, and they are outwearied. From dawn to dusk, from dusk to dawn, they have not ceased their cry : " Father ! father ! my lord and father ! " — but lo ! you came not. You were deaf as a hard old judge before the sorrow of young suppliants. But we are going to give them back at last. The women of the *douar* are even now making them ready to meet you in brave attire. Come, Sheikh, you are our guest ; will you rest, while you wait for them, in my tent ? "

" Will you give them back unsullied ? " inquired

the old man, — unsullied as the accursed day they were stolen from me?"

"Who can ever swear a maid is *unsullied*! Greybeard, you know how the most innocent damsel will cheat in this matter the most *rusé* of Cadis. We are all of us deceived at times, my father; but may my head be accursed, if ever the maidens I stole from you make complaint of violence done them or ill-treatment. Come, Sir!"

They put before him a dish of wheaten *couscous* garnished with slices of hard-boiled eggs and the breasts of fowls, then dates and milk; but he merely touched the viands with his finger tips, — little passed his lips, and this only to avoid offence to his host.

Devoured by anxiety, starting at the slightest sound, he kept murmuring all the time the Caïd, sitting by his side and helping him with his own hands, was pressing him to eat, — murmuring:

"Yamine! Meryem!"

Finally, unable to restrain his eagerness longer, he rose.

"You must pardon my impatience, Caïd Salah, but I am longing to see once more the darlings of

my old age. When they came into the world, I made merry, though such is not our custom. My friends were amazed and said, 'What! you make rejoicings for the birth of *girls*?' And I answered them, 'I do; for the light of their eyes shall be as gold dust brightening the blackness of my old age!' Then they went off laughing and saying over and over again, '*Adda maboul*' — 'the man is mad.' But *they* were the only madmen. Fools! for a dozen years and more the girls have been the sunshine of my days. — 'Tis time to be a-foot, Caïd! It is late, and the roads bristle with perils, when you travel them by starlight with two *toflas* (girls), that the folk of our *douars* have named the "Two Roses."

A happy smile lighted up his bronzed face, and his eyes were moist. The "Two Roses!" — he repeated the words proudly, with all the harmless vanity of a father. — The "Two Roses!" Name of fragrance! He said the words once more, proud that they should know, these Beni-Rahan, beyond the river, that his girls, blossoms of his declining years, had won the title.

"Have no fear," replied the Caïd, "no man will try to take them from you. I will lend you a

good mule, and two of my *Deïras* shall escort you as far as the Oued-Mellegue."

So saying, he turned towards the *dar-diaf*, and asked in a loud voice :

"My children, are you ready?"

"My lord! we wait your orders."

VII

Then the two horsemen came forward, issuing from the gloom, while a fire which burned in a brazier and which an old woman was stirring, made them more and more clearly visible each step they advanced.

Enshrouded in their great hooded dark-blue burnouses, with pointed beard and sword under thigh, pistol in holster and musket on back, they looked like the robber-monks of the League we read of, starting out on some dark emprise.

Each carried, lying across the front of his saddle, a sinister looking package, a long roll or bundle done up in laurel saplings and tied each end with cords of camel's hair.

The middle being thicker than the extremities

made the branches gape, and through the openings could be descried under the thin tissue of a *haïk* gleams of white skin.

At the sight all fell silent. The men stood their ground, looking on grimly; the women fled indoors and hid their faces, and in several tents there rose a sound of stifled weeping.

Meanwhile the father looked too, and stricken suddenly dumb watched the two *Deïras* as they paced slowly forward. His mouth opened, but the tongue clove to its roof, while his eyes, widely dilated and glazed with horror, seemed to refuse to take in the sight.

At length, dashing his two clenched fists to his face, he tore out with his fingers handfuls of his white beard; then running up with tottering steps, felt through the interstices of the boughs the cold stiff bodies of his darlings.

"Yamina!" he called, "Yamina, and my sweet Meryem!"

And he went back and forth from one to the other, like a madman. Then, in a moment, uttering a terrible cry and whirling round, he fell flat, his face to the gronnd.

"Raise him, and take him away," ordered the

Caïd in a cold voice. "What is written, is written. Some men act in one fashion, others in another. God only knows the true way. A curse was upon their heads. We are but clay, and the potter makes of us what seems good to him. No man can tell the fate in store for him. — Listen, men! you will cross the ford and lay him on the further bank of the river between the bodies of his daughters; and to-morrow the Ouchtatas, the Ouarghas, the Bou-Ghanem, and all the Chaouias of the plain will go forth and tell from *douar* to *douar* and from market-place to market-place, how there is no whit of gain to be got by stealing the horses of the Beni-Rahan.

X

THE EMPEROR'S BIRTHDAY

X

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All the morning Lieutenant Clapeyron had been on the top of the detached hill of El-Kouffa, scanning the Desert horizon. But turn his field-glass as he might this way and that, he could not see a thing coming along the grey track that went winding over the rolling plain in the blue distance. True, the Commandant's young wife had promised faithfully to be at the Bordj by ten o'clock; but there, what man can trust a woman's promises and her sense of punctuality, — above all when she happens to be a Parisienne? For a true Parisienne she was, fair and slim, graceful and engaging, young and pretty, — the lady they were expecting. Gallant, as they all are, she was on her way to join her husband amid the sandy wastes.

Never did Jews expect the Messiah more impatiently than the Officers of the Garrison did

on this ocasion the charming little wife of the Commandant-in-Chief of Tuggurt. For a fête without a lady, — is a sea without ships, a head without hair, a dinner without wine, an eye without a sparkle, lips without a smile, in one word life without love.

No doubt, the beauties of the *Smala* had been invited; and the Spahis, soldiers of the *goums*, Sheikhs, and even Caïd Ali, anxious to oblige the Commander of the *Bordj*, had one and all brought their wives and daughters and sisters. But there! Bedouin women, — we saw enough of them all the year round; what we wanted was a real Frenchwoman to preside on the great day. Besides, these daughters of Fathma, with veiled faces, and all muffled up like the sheeted dead, — most irritating for amateurs who love to gather the encouragement that falls from a smiling lip, these Moorish women all as stiff and unassailable as the Sphinx, never break their solemn silence but to emit a short *yu-yu* of command, that sounds more like a stifled yawn than anything else.

Captain Fleury wished for something a little more exciting. *Moulaïas*, *foutahs*, musk, — one was tired to death of it all; and longed for crino-

line, and patchouli, the smart crinoline that reveals a neat leg in an immaculate stocking, the *imperial* crinoline, last refinement of civilization, supreme invention of the enchantress queen that ruled from a throne in the Tuileries ensconced in billowy gauze and silken draperies.

The Tuileries! Heigh ho! We were a very long way from the Tuileries, away on the borders of the *Beled-el-Djerid*; and that is why we longed so to taste, at any rate once in a year, in the swish and swing of starched skirts, some perfume of our native land.

When I say *no* crinolines were available, I exaggerate our state of destitution. There was quite a large crop on the out-skirts of the *Bordj*, but they were not presentable. To begin with, there was *Fifi Folderol*, and when she tarried late, as sometimes happened, on the field-paths among the aloes, her breath left a strong smell of alcohol behind; then there was *Paquita the Pimply*, and *Zizi* known as *Zizi Poodle*, and *Fat Florence*, and *Blondinette Big-Mouth*, and *Ducky Dolores*. These good ladies, *consorts* of the *Mercantis*, who had settled, or squatted if you prefer the term, and built shanties, under the walls of the *Bordj*,

formed in ordinary times at once the ornament of the country-side and the delight of the garrison; but to disfigure our great ceremony with their soiled petticoats, no! it was quite impossible, in common decency, to think of such a thing!

Respectability was a *sine qua non*; a French-woman, and an honest woman, we must have to represent France. This was why little Lieutenant Clapeyron was posted out to keep watch on the Biskara road, for it was now a week since that town had sent in word of the passing through of the charming stranger. She had at once been asked, and had graciously accepted, the task of presiding at the proposed fête, gracing the jousts with her presence and distributing the prizes.

Jousts and games and powder-play! General Desveaux had given orders to the effect that, out in this advanced post, no single thing should be left undone that might dazzle and delight the natives. It was growing to be a matter of the first urgency to make the Emperor's name popular with these frontier tribes whose minds were not yet made up and their loyalty doubtful. There was double pay for the Spahis and Mokalis, a franc a head and a new burnouse for the horsemen of the

Goum, feasts and compliments and princely presents for the Caïds and Sheikhs; while to satisfy the massive hunger of the crowd, there hung on spits over huge fires festoons of sheep and oxen, roasting whole.

So, with a whole year's semi-starvation to make up for, all the *douars* of the neighbourhood came flocking in to the Homeric banquet.

What a picture they made with their strong teeth and hungry jaws working, working indefatiguably!

You should have seen the long, bony, brown fingers of the men, and the poor pale children's thin little hands, and heads and necks and bodies straining towards the beef when it was finally unhooked and carried steaming and sputtering, all unctuous and savoury and juicy, into the middle of the eager groups.

Look how their long nails tear the meat into strips, and how their faces light up, as they cram their mouths chock-full in their greediness. In two twos the carcase is gnawed, scraped, licked clean, as if a pack of jackals had been at it. But they are not satisfied yet; and proceed to crack the bones and extract the marrow, finally leaving the famish-

ed dogs who have likewise crowded in to the feast nothing but the dry skeleton.

Then a sheep to follow, and then another ox, and then more sheep and more oxen and more and more, till the hour when the setting sun glows in the sky as red as old Cordova leather, and the country folk, though eaten up with taxes and forced labour, duties and double duties, peace-imposts and war-imposts, as much as, — more than, ever were the old serfs bound to the soil, for once in a way stretch themselves out luxuriously and digest the good things they have enjoyed in the happy, lazy content of well lined bellies. Forgetting all the long days when the pangs of hunger made them writhe, lost in the pleasure of the moment and a sense of gratitude for one good meal at any rate, they cry to the image of Caesar, emblem of the task-masters who starve them all the rest of the year round:

"Long live the Emperor! Long live the Emperor!".

Such a fête as none in all that country-side had ever witnessed, one they would tell of for many a day on the tablelands of the *Tell*! Sack-races, horse-races, donkey-races, and all the rest of it:

then powder-play, and shooting, and a wonderful sight that was to astonish the simple folk beyond measure! the whole to finish up with a general distribution of burnouses, *haïks*, *berimas* and *chechias* to the needy, in other words to everybody.

Already volley after volley was rousing the echoes; impatient steeds were champing the bit and stamping on the sand, and the gold-broidered *djellals* (horse-coverings) floated in the wind. Many an anxious look was turned towards the Biskara road, but all in vain.

Shortly before mid-day, Clapeyron was observed coming in, looking crestfallen and melanchoy, with his Spahis in attendance. Instead of the charming Parisienne, he was escorting an old *Chaouia*, bearer of a despatch. This announced that the lady was indisposed, and would put off her journey for one day.

What was to be done? Absolutely impossible to postpone the ceremony till to-morrow, to change the day solemnly fixed upon. Everthing was ready. Handsome Caïd Ali, Sub-Lieutenant in the Squadron, was in waiting with his Mokalis, his womankind, his camels and his *Goum*. All the

Chiefs, from the Bou-Djellel to the Djebel Hanmarah had arrived the night before and were sitting their prancing horses and frowning at the delay.

"Damn women and their indispositions" swore Captain Fleury! chewing the end of his cigar savagely; "the Emperor's birthday fête will be clean spoilt. Nobody ever has such confounded bad luck as we do!"

But, next instant, he slapped his forehead. He had just remembered Mme Michu.

No common person, Mme Michu, by any manner of means; but the lawful wife of Mons. Michu, Contractor for the works in progress at the Bordj, a Colonial grandee, a man of weight, and honorary Mayor of the rising Settlement.

Having to remain at least six months to complete the works in hand, he had lately sent for his wife from Constantine to share and charm his exile.

Thus socially and morally and so on, she left nothing to be desired, while personally she was quite presentable, a stout brunette, still attractive enough. A fine down was distinctly visible adorning her upper lip, while the general embonpoint was not less noticeable.

Nobody pretended she was *immaculate*. Immaculate characters don't grow in those parts as common as as buttercups; indeed if report was to be believed, Michu should have had as many horns sprouting on his bald pate as there are olive-trees in the forest of the Adjouzes. Scandal even went further, declaring the *dove* had been *soiled* at an even earlier date in several different houses of indifferent reputation. But there, what would become of us all, if we were to believe everything people say! Besides, in the plain of the *Souf*, some prejudices must needs be disregarded that are scrupulously observed on the plain of Saint-Denis.

After all, it was Michu's business, — not ours. He had chosen to cover up his wife's dead past under the orange-blossoms of the wedding-day, and why should we be more particular than he was?

My word! the excellent woman was a welcome as the flowers in May, and the Captain set off without another moment's delay to invite her with his own mouth to preside over the fête.

She held back a little at first, from modesty, and no doubt annoyed because she had not been

thought of sooner, but ended by consenting, and was conducted all in a flutter of joyous excitement and triumph to the platform, where she took her seat with much dignity.

Decked out in her bravest attire, resplendent with gold like an Indian Rajah, well preserved spite of many a hard bout and nearly forty summers under an African sun, opulent in flesh and high in colour, with the shoulders of a drayman and the quarters of a Limoges mare, she was greeted with a murmur of admiration by the crowd.

Koulouglis, *Chaouias*, *Bedouins*, all love well-fatted dainties, and gazed on the lady's magnificent proportions with wide-eyed, greedy looks, while the Frenchmen present, Officers and Spahis, showed very plainly that if tasting had been allowed, they would have pushed their comrades to one side without much ceremony to get a share.

The platform of state stood at one extremity of the Main Court of the Fort, in which were crowded together two thousand Arabs. Captain Fleury had done things right royally. Rich Tunisian carpets, lent for the occasion by Caïd Ali, covered the steps, and the sides were hung with *frechias* of

many colours, on which were fastened up warlike trophies. But above all else the background excited universal admiration. In the centre of a sun formed of *yatagan* blades and cavalry swords, blazed a bust of the Emperor made of gilt plaster, and underneath an Arabic inscription in letters of gold on a red ground setting forth the proud device : "He illumines the Earth." Crossed colours surmounted and completed the design.

Officers and Native Chiefs draped majestically in their scarlet burnouses, adorned the back of the platform, which was somewhat raised; then in front of them, but on a lower level, were seated in rows on *taharas* the wives and daughters of the *Kebirs*, solemn and motionless beneath their veils and moulaias of silk as so many statues of Mystery. Near them were heaped the prizes : weapons, *djebiras*, long spurs with gold-embroidered leathers, stirrups of damascened steel, figured girdles and turbans, luxurious costumes, silk handkerchiefs and haïks.

Self-conscious and self-important, proud and dignified, M^me^ Michu sat queen and monarch of it all. But before very long, clouds began to rise, obscuring the empyrean of her inward satisfaction,

and little bitter stings of fear and anger to pierce her bosom.

Below, at her feet, lost in the common herd, she began to notice enemies were astir. Looks of hostility were fixed obstinately on her face, disturbing her equanimity and making her exquisitely uncomfortable.

It was *Fifi Folderol*, *Paquita the Pimply*, *Zizi Poodle*, *Blondinette Big-Mouth*, *Fat Florence* and *Ducky Dolores*. What business had these wretched creatures assisting at her triumph, — these despised concubines of the up-country squatters? Alas! alas! she had just recognized in them friends and comrades of her youth, of those days when, a *foolish virgin*, she used to kick up her heels and send her petticoats a-flying over the moon. And now the poor, degraded, insulted, disreputable band was staring the new-comer, the triumphant *parvenue*, out of countenance, fixing her with eyes of grudging ill-will and malicious spitefulness.

Blondinette Big-Mouth would whisper to *Fifi Folderol*, and both would jeer and laugh only too audibly; and words would reach M^me^ Michu's ears of the sort that blast a poor woman's character for ever.

Cruel! to have her triumph spoilt in this squalid way; to hear the yapping of spiteful curs at her heels at the very moment of her high promotion! If Mme Michu had been a student, she might have remembered how Roman Generals at their Triumph bore the insults of a paid calumniator, and have been consoled! but there, Mme Michu knew nothing about History, so she was filled with a consuming shame and a feeling of sullen indignation that made her fingers itch to be at them and her tongue long to scream: "Pack of dirty trollops, hook it! Hook it, you minxes, — or I'll come down, and curl your hair for you!"

She turned to her husband Michu, who solemn and stiff, wearing his municipal scarf about his waist and a white tie, seemed positively uglier and stupider than ever. She was on the point of saying, "Look, man! look, you idiot, at those women!" — but little Lieut. Clapeyron was gazing at her, and Captain Fleury making sheep's eyes in her direction.

So she smiled sweetly instead; and the games began [1]. All was going beautifully, and Mme Michu

1. Students of Anthropology will better understand the *sous-entendu* of the story, if we explain that the Bedawin

wrapped up in the duties of distributing the different prizes, had quite forgotten her low-life critics, when suddenly a loud noise was heard from near the Gate, and two Spahis, muskets on thigh, rode prancing into the Fort.

Then, a moment afterwards, appeared a lady, young, fair-haired and entrancing, wearing a great straw hat and a silk burnouse wrapped round her slim figure. She was mounted on a white mule and escorted by a band of Arab horsemen.

The officers came down eagerly from the platform, and elbowing through the crowd, hurried

braves who took part in the races, ran ABSOLUTELY NAKED! And, owing to the presence of the appetising, unveiled *Parisiennes*, and possibly the cognac consumed, they were worked up into a tremendous pitch of VERY EVIDENT excitement. Burton has pointed out the abnormal size of the *membrum virile* even in a quiescent condition, amongst the Arabs, and Hector France assured me that the sight that day of these bronzed « children of a larger growth » in *statu erectionis* was at once comical and instructive. These simple sons of the desert who saw no shame in Nature's doubly-uncovered nudity, the gleaming eyes of their wives as the panting prize-winners stopped before the *daïs* to receive their guerdon, — the confusion of the European ladies at the visible and unequivocal perturbation of these men *qui mulierem ardentissime cupiebant*, and the amusement of the French soldiers — was a fête that no lapse of time could efface from the mind.

forward to greet the pretty wife of the Commandant of Tuggurt, whom they had long ago given up in despair.

A true Parisienne, she had so contrived as to make her appearance all ready dressed for the fête, having made all her preparations half a mile before reaching the *Bordj* in one of the tents of Caïd Ali's encampment. And now she came forward, a brilliant, ravishing, adorable little figure, and with many excuses for her late arrival, took Captain Fleury's arm, and lightly mounted the steps of the platform, amid the respectful homage of Sheikhs and Caïds bending low with hand on heart.

But the Chair was occupied. M^me^ Michu sat there already, with a pale face and lips set hard in uncompromising determination, watching with supercilious looks and frowning brows her rival's approach.

Then, cap in hand, Fleury came forward, in great embarrassment.

"Madame, a thousand pardons. But..... but..... *Madame la Commandante*, as you see, has arrived, who was to have presided in the first instance..."

"Madame had only to arrive punctually,"

returned M^me^ Michu drily, and without offering to move.

"Oh! of course, of course!" stammered the younger woman in confusion, "I did not know... I would not for worlds take Madame's place. I will sit beside her."

"Go and fetch another chair," said the Captain, "we will have two fair patronesses instead of one," he went on gallantly. "The fête will be just twice as charming."

"Two of us! No, never!" cried M^me^ Michu. "I give up my place to Madame. Indeed I don't how I ever came to mix myself up with all sorts of people here, as I have done. Michu, let us be going."

She had just noticed *Fifi Folderol* and *Fat Florence* tittering with the rest of the lot, and now *Blondinette Big-Mouth* hearing these last words, cried out in her shrill cockney voice:

"Garn, Mother Fat-head! Don't you try to come the fine lady here. *We* know you. You know weren't so grand once on a time at the Cat's Paw, in Queer Street, Constantine, when they called you *Marie Moonface*. Ya! go'long!"

"Lies! lies!" retorted M^me^ Michu.

"Not a bit of it! not a bit," shouted all the rest in chorus. "Ya! *Marie Moonface*!"

"Madame! Madame! I beg you" ejaculated Fleury, driven to bay, "compose yourself..."

But the noise still continuing, while the Kebirs and their womankind were staring in wide-eyed astonishment, he shouted, — to make a diversion:

"Hi! Clapeyron, old man! off with the balloon; let fly all!"

The balloon in question formed the wonderful spectacle promised, the spectacle he counted on most of all to rouse the admiration of the *douars* of the plain, and give the tribesmen who had come in to see the fête an exalted idea of France and the French Emperor. It was hidden, all ready inflated, behind the hangings at the back of the platform, to rise at a given signal majestically abovè the Imperial trophy, carrying up with it fireworks, — a set-piece at which an Artillery Sergeant had been working lovingly for over a month past, representing the glorious eagle of Austerlitz, and intended to go off in a blaze of coloured lights twenty yards above the spectators' heads.

The detaining rope was properly speaking to have been cut only at the moment when the sun was disappearing below the horizon, but Captain Fleury anticipated matters, anxious to distract public attention from the awful scandal that seemed getting more and more atrocious.

"The balloon," he repeated again, "off with it, Clapeyron, off with it!"

"Off with Mother Michu's crinoline, you should say," shrieked *Blondinette Big-Mouth* from the crowd.

"If the old girl would only come down, *we*'d see to that!"

"If you cannot secure me common respect,..." quivered M^me^ Michu, livid with passion. "There! I'm sick of the lot of you! Hi, you! you saucy minxes, here's your crinoline for you! As for you, you... you... set of silly old fogeys; here's all I care for you and your blessed fête!"

And before it was possible to conjecture what she would be at, she darted to the very edge of the platform.

As she did so, the sun was just gliding down to the horizon line, and the buildings of the *Bordj* threw the crowd into deep shadow.

But the platform, standing as it did, right in front of the gap between the two bastions that flanked the Main Gate, remained still in full sunlight, and the imperial bust, flushing purple amid the blazing aureole of the grouped arms that glittered and sparkled against the blue of the crossed flags, was of a sudden greeted with frantic cheers.

Underneath, exactly underneath, the two queens of the fête were the centre of a luminous haze; but while the fires of the setting sun fell caressingly on the fair hair of the younger woman and seemed to surround her pretty head with a *nimbus* of youth and beauty, they lit up a very different face when they shone on M^me^ Michu.

Turning her back to the people and bending double, reverting in her furious anger to a habit of former days, she displayed to the astounded crowd the part which, they say, M. Thiers exposed one evening to his friends between two candles.

And amid the glories of the departing luminary, the opulent rotundities of her person showed dazzlingly for a second, the focus of a halo of golden light [1].

1. Shocking as the spectacle of this richly endowed French lady may seem to the conventional English reader,

First, there was a moment of breathless silence, the silence of profound surprise, then a startling cry of delight and enthusiasm rang out, to be drowned almost instantly by a dreadful explosion.

students of Classic lore will call to mind its prototype in olden story. The legend of the Callipygian Venus is familiar to all. No shame saw the Greeks of the golden period in this part of God's handiwork. Callipygé, as everybody knows, derives from Κάλλος, beauty, and πυγή, the buttocks, meaning rich-buttocked. It was under this title that Venus was adored at Syracuse in a temple erected in her honour by two young girls, themselves of well-developed posterior. The sub-title of Callipygé has also been given to several statues of Venus, the most celebrated of which, known as *La Vénus aux belles fesses*, was discovered in a villa of Nero at Naples. It is actually preserved in the Museo Borbonico. The goddess is represented standing looking over her shoulder whilst she holds up her raised tunic to admire the exquisite contours of her buttocks, which constitute, in fact, the best and largest part of the statue. The origin is said to be as follows : — At Athens young girls wrestled naked, and two sisters thus engaged were so distinguished by the exuberant development of their *fesses* that they thereby made the conquest of two very rich young men, who married them the same day. In memory of the special charms to which they owed their happiness they dedicated a temple to the Callipygian Venus. (Denne-Baron in *Le Dictionnaire de la Conversation.*) Paris, 1862. My friend, Amedée Vignola, the Parisian Artist, who has made a special study of this fascinating subject writes " It seems, *a priori*, that different races stamp their particular seal upon the face of the individual. But few people suspect that the same is

The eagle of Austerlitz, fired by an awkward hand, had gone off behind the platform, tearing the balloon to shreds. Meantime the native crowd, knowing nothing of what was happening, but supposing themselves spectators of the promised sight of wonder, intoxicated with gratification, filled with ardent gratitude to the Sultan of the Franks who gave them free, gratis and for nothing, so pleasing a spectacle, enthusiastically applauded the charms M^me^ Michu had shown them, raising again and again and again loud cries of "Long live the Emperor! Long live the Emperor!"

Then, naturally supposing the other fair foreign lady had likewise mounted the platform in order to make them the same gratifying exhibition and getting impatient when she showed no signs of moving, they clamoured insistently for this item of the programme with vigorous shouts of, "The other lady! now the other! the other! Your turn, milady! your turn now!"

true when envisaged *à posteriori.*" He maintains that nowhere is divergence of race represented more strongly than *dans la partie la plus charnue de leur gracieuse personne*, and that *l'envers de la femme est marqué du sceau de la race!*

XI

THE BRIDAL OF LITTLE ZAIRAH

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I

Every Friday for six months I used to see her arrive, trotting behind her father's mule, sometimes alone, but more often an old woman at her side. She was quite little, — barely twelve; but so

small and slender that she looked two years younger. Child of Baba Aaroun's old age, her mother had died at fourteen in giving her birth. So the old man loved her well, though she was only a girl; and when her limbs began to bend under her with fatigue, or the stones bruised her feet, he would take her up before him on the *barda* of his mule, as he would have done with a son. But he always put her gently down again, before he entered the town of Djidjelly.

It was then that we used to see her pass, a careless, happy child, before the *bordj* of the Spahis.

But soon, like the sisters we read of in Leviticus, she grew a woman, — in a day. Her waist grew small, her hips large; two symmetrical spheres of gracious curve showed beneath her cotton *gandourah*; the bud was almost a flower. The child was now shy, and blushed at a look; at the same time so pretty a little maid that every market-day for weeks Arabs and Berbers would take their seat at the Gate in the angle of the bastion, at the hour when business opens, to see this wonder of the Ouled-Aïdoun pass by.

Then they would prowl round Baba Aaroun's market-stall, buying his water-melons and figs for

the privilege of admiring near at hand the fair-haired Khabyle damsel, whose great startled eyes reflected every tint of blue, — of sky and sea.

He knew what he was doing, did old Aaroun; he knew well enough that when his little Zaïrah was with him, the double load of fruit from his garden disappeared as though a benevolent *Jinn* had touched it with his finger and changed his wares into handfuls of *sordis*, for he had as purchasers all the Spahis, and all the Turkos, all the *Mokalis*, and every young Moorish exquisite in the Town.

His neighbours made fun of him; but what of that? He knew with no less certainty that under his eye the maid would be safe and unharmed far more surely than if he were to leave her at the *gourbi* and entrust her to the careless guard of her step-mothers and her grown-up sisters.

There is not much to choose betwixt the two. The towns are full of old men eager to taste the unripe fruit; the mountains swarm with striplings keen and clever to mark down and seize the prey.

And both classes longed to enjoy her favours.

But the girl felt confused and ashamed. She was old enough to understand, and when their ardent glances fell on her, she would hide a blusihng face behind the corner of her *haïk*.

Amid all this admiration, the *Chaouch* Ali-ben-Saïd was conspicuous for his marked attentions.

True, forty years had struck on the time-piece of his days. But he still passed for one of the handsomest horsemen of his town and for one of the most doughty champions with women; and this, being united with qualifications that were quite exceptionnal, had earned him the title of Bou-Zeb, a name best left untranslated.

In a word, he had those qualities which Oholah and Oholibah, enterprising ladies of Biblical fame in the times of the Prophet Ezekiel, required their lovers to possess.

He was a good dresser, and a good talker, conspicuous for his stylish turban with its embroideries in yellow silk, his goldtrimmed vest, and the dazzling whiteness of his burnouse. So Moorish maids and Khabyle beauties made eyes at him, and the *Mercanti's* wives even confessed that for a "Native" he was not so bad a figure of a man, in other words that they thought him fascinating.

He spoke French fluently, drank absinthe and wine, — and indeed any other liquor you were good enough to offer him, wore stockings, used a pocket-handkerchief, eschewed fleas, and scrupulously abstained from keeping the *Rhamadan* (the great Mohamedan fast).

He possessed some property, and could have lived in idleness in a country where a *douro* a day is an ample income. But wishing to shine in society and knowing how women love best those who make a show, he had entered the service of the *Bureau Arabe*, and flaunted, on days of ceremony, the blue burnouse of a *Chaouch*.

This secured him the pleasure of hearing himself called *Sidi* (My lord) by his fellow-religionists, and gave him the privilege of looking down on them as a contemptible, lousy crew, without their daring to retaliate with similar elegant names.

The Bedouins whom as a *Koulougli* (son of a Turk) he utterly despised, paid him back his scorn *in petto*, and would exclaim when they saw him, " Son of Eblis the Accursed ", or in other words, Good-for-Nothing. This he cared no more for than he did for a scurvy Jew, knowing perfectly well it is a title that rather commends a man than other-

wise to the daughters of Fathma, as to every daughter of Eve.

Nothing surprising in the fact that this brawny rascal fell fiercely in love with our little Zaïrah. But what did seem very extraordinary is that the latter, passing one day on her mule, threw a smile to the great, bearded, forty-year-old Ali.

Was it the blue *Chaouch's* burnouse that took her maiden fancy? was it the Moor's braided robes? or had the fame of the title of Bou-Zeb and its owner's repute penetrated to the wilds of the Khabyle village where she dwelt? At evening, behind the cactus hedges of the *gourbi* or under the festoons of the wild vine, did she and her childish comrades discuss the exploits of this champion lover?

Yet who can ever tell the secret thoughts that stir in a maiden's breast, the mysterious, wild cravings of her young heart?

Or perhaps it was her old father, the wily Aaroun, who was tired of keeping guard over a treasure so liable to be stolen, and ordered his daughter to smile on the rich suitor, who could pay him, as he knew, a good price for her hand.

Whichever way it was, there is no doubt that from that day " the blue-eyed witch " was no more seen at the *Souk-el-Kemmis* (Friday market), and the report went abroad in the town that Ali-ben-Saïd had charged his old mother to go to the *Ouled-Aïdoun* to buy the maid from her father, and that the latter demanded 200 *douros*.

Indeed the Azoudja (Old Woman), who had started one morning for the *douar* of the Ouled-Aïdoun, returned at evening her mouth running over with the most enthusiastic praises.

" Oh! The Queen of the roses! Oh! fairest flower of Paradise! Oh! bud of entrancing beauty "

Never! never! in all the fifty years she had watched over young girls blossoming into beautiful women, whether in town or country, in the mountains or in the *dacheras* of the plain, never had her eyes been gladdened with the vision of so much loveliness!

For the Baba Aaroun, eager to win so influential a son-in-law, a *Chaouch* who had the ear of the head of the *Bureau Arabe*, one who could at any moment it pleased him enfold his father-in-law's shoulders with the scarlet burnouse that pro-

claims a man a Sheikh, and is so warm and comfortable a wrap to old age, had artfully displayed his child to the Azoudja unveiled in all her dazzling beauty.

On her return, she sat for a full hour describing one by one with the unwearying zest of a child the charms and graces of the fair Zaïrah. At once minute and long-winded, she omitted no single detail; while her son listened to her seductive report with open mouth and watering lips, and eyes aflame.

Accordingly the matter was soon concluded, the *sadouka*[1] paid over to the father, and the wedding-day fixed.

II

All along the gently sloping flanks of the Khabyle hills, between Milah and Djidjelly, in all the villages of the Ouled-Aïdoun, men still tell of the bridal of little Zaïrah.

1. Sum of money paid by the future bridegroom as the price of his wife.

For the *Bureau Arabe* officials of the District were present in a body at the wedding-feast, to do honour to their head *Chaouch*; and for three whole days the *feux de joie* re-echoed over the steep, wooded ravines, in the olive-clad gorges and on the wide gorse-covered plain.

There was a grand procession, a grand display of what most glads the sight of mountaineer and lowlander alike, the long tresses of women and the horses' long *djelals*[1].

There was grand feasting too; sheep roasted whole and vast dishes of *couscous*.

For three days the youthful bride was to be seen, white and pale under her *haïks*. Her great liquid eyes glittered in her face; ane scented with *attar* of roses and musk, decked out with copper gawds and jewels of silver, she stirred many a man's desire.

Old and young repeated : " Oh! beauteous casket of love! " while the women, matrons and maids, envied her, — for was she not to sit at her husband's fireside without a rival, sole wife and mistress of his home.

1. Horsecloths of silk embroidered with gold that rich riders put over their horses' quarters on festival days.

Then they would whisper tales of the exploits of the happy man who owned this pearl of delicate beauty.

Oh! the lucky scamp! Clouds of envy gathered about him, thick as the dust clouds a stallion of the *Haymour* raises round his flying hoofs. What! was it not enough for more than twenty years to have been ever successful at cozening husbands and seducing maids? Was it fair that now, grown grey in enjoyment, he should still find the rosy cheeks of a virgin bride, a sweet maid of twelve summers, to rub his grizzled beard against?

Bou Zeb! Bou Zeb! they muttered, and all laughed at the nick-name. But the matrons shook their heads, commiserating in whispers the poor child offered up a sacrifice to old Aaroun's lust of gold.

At evening Ali-Ben-Saïd came on horseback to conduct his bride home. To right and left on either side two kinsmen held the reins of her horse, while the wedding guests, each carrying a lantern, followed in procession.

At the head went the musicians, preceded by a Khabyle bearing a great branching candlestick

blazing with lighted tapers and decked with flowers.

At the door of the *gourbi* they halted, and the *Chaouch* went in. Baba Aaroun presented his daughter to the bridegroom, and she took off her veil ceremoniously before the husband her father had chosen.

Then Ali, dazzled with her beauty, cried out like the Prophet of old at sight of the fair Zaïrah displayed half naked before his eyes :

" Praise be to God, Master of the hearts of men! "

After kissing her on the mouth, he wrapped her in the *moulaïa*, and mounted her on a white mule. Then walking behind, his drawn sword lifted above his wife's head as a sign of his rights, he led her amid the escort of kinsmen and friends to his home and hers. Two matrons shut to the door behind them, while outside the crowd took up its stand in the street, awaiting the customary proofs of the bride's virginity.

They sat in front, ranged along the line of the houses. But presently as they were imbibing the cups of scalding coffee the *caouadjis* brought them, loud cries of pain issued from the recesses of the

house. Faint and stifled at first, they soon grew shrill and terrible, freezing on the lips of those who heard them the roguish laughter and merry gibes that ran from group to group.

The screams lasted long, — so long that the wedding folk wearied of them and raised protes ting cries from the street.

" *Chaouch* ", they shouted, " be gentle with the child. The pomegranate is not ripe yet. "

And women took up the protest, crying indignantly :

" Ali-Ben-Saïd, have some pity! Remember you are thirty years older than the child. Remember she is weak, whilst you are strong; and that the ewe-lamb cannot support the he-goat's ons laught".

Then other women, more angry yet, raised their voices in loud appeals to the bride :

" Zaïrah-bent-Aaroun! Zaïrah-bent-Aaroun! Claim a divorce ! You should claim a divorce ".

But the agonized cries still went on, and they threatened to go for the *Cadi*.

However of a sudden the cries stopped. There was a deep silence; then the little casement open-

ed, and the two matrons, with dishevelled hair and pale faces, shook out a sheet before the faces of the crowd.

Then the men waiting below raised their lanterns, and seeing the linen stained with blood, applauded the happy husband, and loudly shouted, Bou-Zeb! Bou-Zeb!

Neither next day nor for several days following did the *Chaouch* appear. Doubtless he was resting by the side of his heart's mistress.

But the fifth day the narrow street was once more crowded. The wedding folk were there again.

The door was thrown open, and the bridegroom came out pale and haggard, followed by two men who carried a bier on their shoulders. On this lay stretched a small and slender shape, wrapped in a *haïk*.

And chanting the verses of the Book : " Wheresoever you be, Death stands in the way to strike " all followed to the graveyard the body of little Zaïrah.

But when they had laid the child in the vault, with the green cerecloth wound about her, and the grave was filled in, the women of the tribe, as

they went by, spat upon old Baba-Aroun, who with dry eyes and dazed brain crouched beside the little mound of freshly turned earth.

XII

IN HASHISH-LAND

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I

" Have you ever seen ranged along the walls of the Ceramicus at Athens, in the first days of the New Year when the sun's rays, — the genial Sun, regenerator of all things living, — warms them to some show of life, a long line of men, haggard and motionless, with hollow cheeks and dulled, brutish looks; some crouching low like animals; others standing indeed, but leant languidly against pillars for support, bending nigh double under the load of their nerveless frame?

Spectres like these, that move through the fantastic pages of Charles Nodier's Tales, I have seen any day in the streets of Constantine with my own eyes. Howbeit the phantom forms I saw walking there, with tottering gait, shuddering at the cold and muffled like fever-stricken wretches in their burnouses drawn close about fleshless

limbs, were no imaginary victims, like the hag-ridden sufferers of Athens or Larissa, who fancied themselves objects of the vengeance of Thessalian witches. They were men possessed, it is true; but rejoicing in their possession, or rather unconscious of their degradation, slaves delivered over of their own will to a master more puissant than all the gods of Olympus, and all the genii of Eastern climes, and all the fairy-kings of Western lands, and all the wizards and all the witch-wives, — the mighty monarch *Hashish*.

I had for a very long time been consumed with a desire to penetrate the mystic realms of this Sovereign, so seductive that men devote themselves to him body and soul. But his Court is closed against the profane, and the rites of initiation cannot be performed in a day; and so all my attempts and all my efforts had been thus far in vain.

" The reason is you have no one to act as your guide ", my friend told me, my friend the *Thaleb*, El Hadj Ali Bou Nahr, a learned man and a wise. He was of those who have studied more deeply in the Book of Life, a book for ever sealed to fools, than in the manuals of orthodox morality, — at once Mussulman and Epicurean, one who scouted

prejudices and scorned the asses that are ruled by them, a sound judge of good wine and a pretty face.

A few days later, one rainy evening in January, I had taken shelter under the pent-house of a native shop in the Street of the Mozabites, and was amusing myself listening to the chatter of two young negresses till the shower should clear up, when a grave voice broke silence behind me :

" Ho, there! What are you squandering your time on now, my son? Negresses, oh, fie! Leave that to old men, who need a high-spiced dish! Come with me, and I will show you something better".

" Where are you going? "

" Melancholy comes with the rain; but 'tis for men of wit and education to rise superior to the common herd of fools, and let neither men nor weather depress their spirit. I am going to undertake a journey to Hashish-land, and if you will come with me, I will open you the gates of Paradise.

" Whose Paradise? Mahomet's? "

" Mahomet's of course. ' Tis the only one seductive to mankind, and within the grasp of his human intellect, — a fact which proves the great

superiority of Mohamed son of Abdallah over Jesus son of Joseph. Come, let us make a start".

We went down into the lower districts of the town, where remained still quite unaltered the strange, picturesque characteristics of the ancient Numidian city, and that in spite of Théophile Gautier's axiom that vanishing Barbarism hunted by encroaching civilization invariably takes refuge on the hill-tops. We halted eventually in a dirty lane in front of a shop, or rather a sort of recess five or six feet square, contrived in the basement wall of an old house crumbling to pieces with decay. It was raised quite a yard from the pavement, and two venerable Bedouins, filthily dirty, but grave and impassive as two mutes of the Seraglio, sat within on the remains of a mat of *alpha*-grass, playing a solemn game of chess. One of them, evidently the proprietor, smiled a dignified smile, placed his hand on his heart, and then extended it to each of us in turn to help us mount the enormously high stone step giving access from the street.

We penetrated into the shop, if shop it could be called; for though the recess was much like the nooks where Arab merchants ordinarily devote

themselves to the delights of business, there was nothing to be seen within or without to attract a purchaser. A few bundles of dried herbs hung on the rough walls, leading one to suppose it the establishment of a herbalist, — but a herbalist given to darkling and suspicious practices, ready at a moment's notice to procure abortion, or concoct a love-potion, a professor of the art and mystery of cupping, a dealer in amulets and charms, half doctor, half sorcerer.

The general aspect of the place was sufficiently unprepossessing. A single lamp, made out of a chipped glass, hung from the ceiling by a brass wire; it was provided with some foul-smelling oil and a smoky wick, and threw a feeble, flickering light on chess-board and players, leaving everything else in semi-darkness.

These latter moreover, as soon as ever we were inside, no longer paid us the smallest attention, but became once more absorbed in their game. So, without further preliminaries, we advanced into the cave, for a sort of cave it really was. Making a sharp turn, it penetrated deeper and deeper into the gloom, a second poisonous-smelling lamp only serving to make the place look yet more dismal and funereal.

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to explain to my satisfaction; true, the entrance in the lane by which we had come in was above the street-level, but the room in which we now were, owing to the steep slope of the rock, was in the basement of a house in the lane above. With this house it communicated by means of a winding stairway without balustrade. At one side was a stove in which burnt a large fire, big enough to light up the whole apartment. Near it stood a wild-looking *Caouadji*, with naked arms and legs; while crouching on the mats or extended full length, a dozen Bedouins were passing tiny pipes of red earthenware from hand to hand. They all wore a dull, heavy, stupified expression of countenance, and inhaled the smoke one after the other in perfect silence. Facing them was an orchestra of three musicians, a *Rhebeb* (sort of double bass), a *Tam-tam* and a Flute Player.

But there, everybody knows, at any by hearsay, all about the smokers of *Kif*, one of the forms of *Hashish*. It is not these I want to describe, but the effects it produced on mysetf.

Meantime the *Caouadji* brought us coffee, then a supply of the *Kif* and pipes. However El-Hadj Ali had to load up mine several times over before I

experienced any other feeling beyond one of a general drowsiness.

Presently sharp pain roused me from this pleasant languor. Dreadful cramps racked my nerves, while I felt sharp twitchings in all my limbs, as if I were being tortured with a thousand needle-pricks. The pain began in the head, particularly the back of the head, flowed like molten metal down the spine, and seemed to run along the marrow of the bones to the extremities.

The agony became at one moment so intolerable I had to hold myself hard not to cry out, and having put my hand to the back of my neck, the contact was so painful it felt as though the bony envelope were broken through and my brains yielded under the pressure of my fingers.

" Let us go", I said to my companion : " I have had enough of this. I can stand no more!"

" Patience! through this painful initiation must needs pass the profane. Brave its terrors, and you will enter the enchanted realm of *Hashish-land*.

" I cannot! I wish Hashish-land and all its enchantments at the devil!"

" Inhale a few more mouthfuls from this pipe; the pain will disappear. ".

But my skin was burning so fiercely that when I would have taken the pipe, it was like a bar of red-hot iron to the touch.

This was the end of my sufferings. The pain went off by degrees, leaving behind a feeling of languorous happiness much more intense that that experienced at first. As puff succeeded puff, I felt a mighty, ineffable delight come over me, a heart-felt, lasting feeling of enjoyment, an absolute oblivion of all the incommodities and sorrows of life! I felt myself the centre of a world-pervading love. Eager to share my bliss with all the other guests who had seemed to me a somewhat ragged, poverty-stricken crew, I called the *Caouadji*, and feeling in my pockets I tossed him with the gesture of a Sultan a handful of copper coins and little silver pieces, bidding him regale the company with coffee, *kif*, and anisette, and send for dancing-girls!

" Yes! yes! dancing-girls ", echoed the *Thaleb*, " make them send for dancing-girls! "

The *kif*-smokers raised their heads. My order had roused them from their heavy drowsiness. I took an exquisite pleasure in noting their surprise, saying to myself : " Ha, ha! the old cavern is

going to see some fun. Our friends are not so dull as they look ".

" Send for women ", repeated El Hadj Ali-bou-Nahr again, in a tone of command ".

II

The *Caouadji* did not move. An empty cup in one hand and the tiny, long-handled coffee-pot in the other, he threw a gesture of interrogation towards the *Thaleb*, no doubt amazed to hear an order of the sort from a mouth that as a rule in public gave utterance only to verses from the Koran and precepts of morality.

But the latter, excited by the vapour of the poisonous herb, his eyes flashing with anger, shouted :

" *Caouadji*, spawn of Satan, did you not hear? The Roumi you see before you is my friend ; nay! he is my brother. He asks for dancing-girls, and he pays for them. Go, fetch us women. "

" Yes! yes! " chorussed the Bedouins, " the Roumi has paid. Women, *Caouadji*, you spawn of Satan! women! women! "

They were all wide enough awake now! and lust lit up phosphorescent gleams that flashed fitfully from the eyes but now so dull and dead.

"The Roumi has paid", they kept on saying; still I felt my handful of coins could hardly be enough, and I understood the man's hesitation. But the *Thaleb* had seconded my order, and he was known to be a rich man. No doubt he would make himself responsible for part of the expense.

I turned and looked at him. He returned my gaze with a smile and a nod; and I could see it in his eyes that the intoxication was working in his brain. "Very good! very good!" he muttered, "we are going to have some real fun now"; and as a matter of fact, — I have said so before — a feeling of enjoyment already filled me to overflowing.

"Women! dancing-women!" The order was magical in its effect on all within the hall. The orchestra fell suddenly silent, as though the Musicians were reserving their strength to give their rarest melodies presently, The *Rhebeb*-player, an old man of sixty with a deeply furrowed brow, was passing his tongue softly over his white

moustache, as if he felt the savour of a young girl's kiss; the flute-player, a beardless youth, was moving his flute with a cynical disregard of decorum up and down in a highly suggestive mimicry, affecting a love-sick pose, while the man who thrummed the *tarbouka*, an aged negro with a tattoo'd face rolled round his big eyes and showed the whites, pushing his great thumb along the parchment of his instrument the while and then putting it to his lips with exaggerated gestures of exquisite enjoyment, in so comic a way I positively crowed with delight.

* * *

In spite of the sudden intoxication that had come over me so suddenly and strangely, I was able to observe all my surroundings with perfect distinctness, while at the same time the recollection of a previous conversation I had had with the *Thaleb* was clearly present to my mind in its smallest details. It related to a Moorish dancing-girl, whose beauty and wanton charms had made a deep impression on me a few days before in an Arab café near the El-Kantara Gate. Easy

then to picture my amazement when I saw the pretty performer in question descend the winding stair and take her place in front of the musicians, who at once struck up one of their most impassioned airs.

Her unexpected appearance confused me at first; but I was soon able to explain the riddle to myself, concluding that the cellar where we were smoking *kif* must be on the basement floor of a café. In fact, on recalling the lie of the ground and the disposition of the lanes I had traversed in company with the *Thaleb*, I made the discovery that we were at that moment exactly under the very café at which I had first admired the girl. Further remembering the enthusiastic terms in which I had described her only the day before to my friend Ali-bou-Nahr, I could not help thinking it was he who had been so obliging as to contrive a pleasant surprise for me, and that he was even now tasting a secret satisfaction in my wonder and delight.

I was on the point of making a little speech of thanks, but when I looked at him, I saw a face with such an expression of dull heavy content and utter stupefaction that I could not restrain a shout of laughter. Contrary to the usual habit of

kif-smokers, he had kept his pipe between his teeth, and though it had gone out long ago, he persisted with an idiotic assumption of determination in his efforts to make it draw.

Meanwhile the rapture that flooded my being had redoubled at the coming of the dancing-girl, and I fairly devoured her with my eyes, straining forward with beating heart and eager lips. The sight of her beauty filled me with the most delicious sensations, sensations so entrancing in their intensity that all merely carnal desire was stilled. For an instant I realized the bliss of the Righteous in the Christian heaven, where the sole contemplation of God suffuses the blessed with joy ineffable. But it was only for an instant, for I very soon came down again to the less exalted beauties of Mahomet's Paradise, of which the graceful damsel before my eyes seemed a living and perfect specimen.

She wore the costume I remembered on the previous occasion : a long robe half blue half yellow, drawn in at the loins by a green *foutah*.

Under the thin gauzy material could be seen, for the dress was open in front to the navel, the twin globes of her polished bosom, and beneath

the tightly drawn *foutah* the almost exaggerated prominence of the opulent hips.

The girdle of gold embroidery, a hand's-breadth wide and worn very loose, fell low on the belly. Her arms, large and magnificently developed, were bare to the shoulder, bare also the calves and small arched feet. A silver bangle tinkled on the ankle, for she had kicked off her little red slippers embroidered in gold and left them near the orchestra.

I saw her very much better than on the former occasion, first because I was nearer, but also because my senses had acquired such keenness I could have read the Arabic characters on the glittering sequins that formed an ever-moving, graceful frame to her face, which was as fine and regular as a statue's. I could even catch the scent of musk that exhaled from a tiny silken sachet on her bosom, and presently when she grew warm in the dance the heady, moist perfume of her body.

The dance was the world-old Arab step, always the same, but so imbued with a certain voluptuous grace one never tires of it. The lovely girl smiled softly as she glided from one seductive attitude to another, faint with a languorous ecstasy, swaying

her striped silken kerchief this way and that, turning, turning slowly on herself, with wanton, suggestive tremors of the hips, in time to the wild music. I was so lost in ardent contemplation of her charms that I did not just at first observe the extraordinary brilliance that lit up every corner of the underground hall. The two chipped glasses filled with foul-smelling oil in which floated a smoky wick, had disappeared, or at any rate I no longer noticed them, their feeble glimmer being drowned in the dazzling illumination of blazing chandeliers in all parts of the room.

However I had no time to indulge in wonder at the sight. A still more astonishing one awaited me. The hall was changing by degrees into a perfect *harem*, filling, filling with young and pretty women. I could see then coming one after the other down the stone steps of the little stairway.

Where did they come from? Was Constantine sending all her dancing-girls from every Moorish café in the city? Or had the *Thaleb* brought me to the general headquarters of the profession? I asked myself these questions, experiemcing new and ever new sensations of voluptuous delight

within me; and in my enthusiasm shook my companion roughly, indignant at seeing him still idiotically puffing away at his extinguished pipe and drawing in imaginary smoke. I felt offended at his drowsy looks, as he lay there with half-shut eyes, quite indifferent in all appearance to the procession of *houris*.

III

The new comers grouped themselves near the original performer, and with the same graceful undulations as hers, with the same voluptuous rhythmical movements, the same play of eyes and hips and kerchief, lips half open showing the white line of dazzling pearly teeth, they marked the beat of the music with their palpitating loins, now slowly and languorously, now quick and passionately, following the caprices of the players, who were themselves half mad with excitement.

I experienced, besides, an unspeakable pleasure in listening to the wild, barbaric music. I seemed to be watching a series of marvellous arabesques of the utmost complexity standing out in relief,

with an astonishing intensity of tone and an incomparable brilliancy of colour, on a background of fresh lime-wash that covered the cracks and stains of a crumbling wall. I was by now floating in an ocean of voluptuous delight, a sea of pleasure in which all my senses swam, each severally stimulated by a delicious eddy of the high-tide of joy; and lo! the dancers, as they wound in and out in their graceful convolutions, proceeded next to unfasten one by by one all the different portions of their dress. First the brilliant kerchief of silk and gold fell from the head, then the striped *foutah* slid down the hips, the trailing robes slipped off the shoulders, while the gauzy vest fluttered a moment in mid air, then dropped on the heap of many-hued garments on the floor. And now the girls, crossing and re-crossing, intermingling, intertwining, intertwisting, a maze of waving limbs and amorous contortions, yet never for an instant breaking the complicated figures of their dance, displayed their naked bodies to us, like a bevy of forest-nymphs.

And lo! Fauns and Satyrs came and formed a group, ringing them in and panting with desire. Lost in an ecstasy, I had not observed that the

hall, almost empty on our entrance, was rapidly filling with spectators. No doubt they came by the same way as ourselves, by the little dark mysterious shop in the lane; but you would have thought the enchanted woods of Thessaly, first sending us their gracious swarms of nymphs, had then let loose their legions of goat-footed deities to follow.

Under the ample folds of the Eastern mantle, under the rags of the Bedouins, the rich finery of the Moors, the striped sack of the Negroes, the long robe of the men of the *Souf* : under turbans and *haïks* dazzlingly white or yellow with secular filth; under coats and vests and trousers, braided, and green, blue, orange, scarlet in hue; limbs bronzed and shaggy, boots of morocco leather gold-embroidered; under all this luxury and under all these rags, — rich and poor commingled, all equal in presence of the same overmastering human need, — quivered the passionate fire of the old Hebrew Goat-God, him to whom the love-sick Jewish women made sacrifice, — the erotic *hircus* (goat) of Virgil, a true son of the Greeks, — the holy image of Mendes, son of the Babylonians, — the favourite mount of the Love-God-

dess, — *hircipes* (Goat-Foot), symbol of brute, animal passion, such as at times bursts forth in every age, — the great God Pan, old as the hills, eternal and divine, master of the World!

Up! up! fierce and furious is the love-frenzy of wanton Fauns, and Satyrs, and Goats! And like the great Apelles, they drank in with eyes intoxicate the fair sight of twenty Phrynés, as naked as the Anadyomené — and more lovely — when the artist gazed on the goddess of beauty rising from the blue waves of the Saronic gulf, — nay! *more* naked, for the golden-haired courtesan of Athens had a veil in her long flowing locks, while the dark tresses of the Moorish dancing-girls, close twisted in a single plait, hid nothing from the greedy eye.

Now I had come with the especial purpose of experimenting on myself, so I tried hard to keep my wits together, that threatened to slip away out of my control.

The *Thaleb* had assured me that under the intoxication produced by *kif*, a man could by an exertion of will retain his consciousness of realities. Accordingly I summoned up all my energy of mind to gather together the fragments

of my reason, that was cracking and tearing like an overstrained cloth.

What I particularly dreaded was to commit some extravagance that would have made me an object of pity to these men, who all succeeded in maintaining under the lash of passion a perfectly impassive demeanour. Their eyes, indeed, darted flames, their features twitched in nervous spasm, their chests panted hotly, but they held their bodies still in a dignified quiescence. I could not do this; on the contrary I tossed and turned, ready each instant to stretch out my arms and dart them amid the intricacy of moving naked limbs, that came so close in their fantastic gyrations I could feel the heat of their proximity.

What struck me the most was, on the one hand the feeling of mad hallucination creeping over my brain and gradually overwheming my reason, and on the other an astonishing vividness of the senses, making me appreciate the exquisite charm of the impressions made on them, but magnified a hundred fold, as in the case of sight the microscope is able to do. "The girls I see", I kept repeating to myself, "are merely common wenches, low-class prostitutes, most likely plain and

dirty; the orchestra that ravished my soul, a jumble of discordant noises; the perfumes that intoxicate my senses, stinking musk and coarse incense. Yet under the influence of the *kif*, I see and hear and smell only delight".

Although I was in an altogether abnormal state, my thoughts, it would seem, were not in any way unreasonable; and the sole annoyance I experienced was the trifling one that when I strove to analyze my impressions and fix them in my mind, they seemed to yield like melted wax under pressure.

Nor had I lost my memory. I recalled perfectly how I had inhaled the smoke of six pipefuls of the *kif*, also why and in what circumstances I had originally come; and I observed with the greatest surprise the somnolent condition and dull, heavy looks of my friend the *Thaleb*, who still keeping the useless mouthpiece at his lips, seemed all the while utterly indifferent to the entrancing series of pictures that passed before him.

As for me, no single thing in all the fairy scene escaped me, nothing flawed the exquisite keenness of my physical perceptions. My senses seemed to have the gift of ubiquity, that of hearing being no exception.

I could hear separately and distinctly each of the wild notes of the three instruments, and each gave me infinite gratification. I could hear at the same time the light, rhythmical step of the dancers, their quick breathing, the slight contact of their hips as the girls glided by each other, the almost imperceptible rustling of the silk kerchiefs they waved over their heads, and of their rounded arms as they were lifted, showing the armpits scrupulously freed from hair; I was equally conscious of the silvery tinkle of bracelets and necklets, and the still softer sound made by the rows of sequins round the dancers' necks.

And among all the figures swiftly revolving amid a ruddy haze of light, in all the whirl of legs and arms, of polished bosoms and slim forms and curving loins, swinging past, disappearing and appearing once again, my ardent gaze, my longing eyes, my heart, my whole being, were directed persistently to one beauteous shape, graceful and statuesque, — to Aïcha, the first and fairest of the dancers, who subjugated I suppose by the magnetic attraction of the highly-charged atmosphere about her, and having recognized me as the only foreigner present, and possibly too as the young-

est and most enthusiastic of her admirers, presently ceased to distribute her smiles and glances to all and sundry with impartial indifference, as she had been doing hitherto, and aimed her whole battery of attractions at me alone.

She even managed to pass so close to me, slackening her whirling steps in their feverish course, that I brushed her white body with my lips, and master of myself no longer, my resolution broken, I waited for her with open arms, and as she went by once more, I seized her frankly round the waist and pulled her down on my knees,..... and the seventh heaven opened its gates.

*
* *

I know nothing of what passed round about me, whether I was the object of the Arabs' raillery, nor how the lights came to go out suddenly; but something resembling the blow of a hammer on my forehead woke me sharply from my exceeding happiness, and I heard Ali-bou-Nahr with his rather hoarse voice shouting in my ear:

"Well! are you pleased? Wake up. I say! wake up!"

I lifted my head painfully, — it seemed to

weigh a hundred pounds, — ant cast a scared look round me.

The cellar had returned to its former dismal, gloomy look. The two foul-smelling lamps were smoking worse than ever, the stove was almost out, and the *Caouadji* lay curled up on a bench, fast asleep with his chin touching his knees, snoring hoarsely in the otherwise silent room. Five or six Bedouins, stretched here and there on mats, were also sleeping.

" And the dancing-girls ", I exclaimed, " and Aïcha ! Gone ? all gone? "

" Oh, ho ! she is called Aïcha, is she? Blondinette is the name of mine. A French girl I know well, sweet as a May morning, ardent as a midday in July ; ah, me ! ah, me ! the peerless maid she is ! "

" A French girl ! a blonde ! Why ! I saw none but dark Moorish beauties. "

Each man dreams that which he has not, " replied the *Thaleb* sententiously ? " and herein lies the wondrous potency of the *kif*. The God's hands are full of all delights that each man may wish for. But we must not abuse his generosity, like the degraded creatures you see yonder. "

In short, as he was re-arranging his turban and eating grapes he observed a man with the same calm dignity of demeanour as though he had just risen from his prostrations in the Mosque, where he had been reciting the verses of the one True Book.

'What were these two camel-girls here just now, sweet camel-girls?'

'Is it your dreams, my son? You have been the enemy of the vain. But the radiant visions that fill us as we sleep from the day they take off our swaddling-clothes to the hour the winding sheet is bound round us — tell me, are not these the best and brightest thing we possess in life?'

XIII

ARAB HOSPITALITY

So saying, he got up, re-arranging his turban and putting straight the disorder of his dress with the same calm dignity of demeanour as though he had just risen from his prostrations in the Mosque, where he had been reciting the verses of the one True Book.

" What ! were there not dancing-girls here just now, naked dancing-girls ? "

" Yes ! in your dreams, my son ! You have taken the shadow for the reality But the radiant visions that lull us to sleep from the day they take off our swaddling-clothes to the hour the winding sheet is folded round us, — tell me, are not these the best and brightest thing we possess in life ?

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XIII

ARAB HOSPITALITY

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I

It was still early morning when Lieutenant F.... started from Djidjelly, and following the coast as far as the *Oued Djidjin* struck into the

mountain country. He was to make the midday halt at the fort of Châamah, sleep at that of Fedj-el-Arba, then next night with the Caïd of Milah, and so arrive the second day at Constantine. Two native Spahis and a muleteer in charge of his baggage accompanied him.

On reaching the first spurs of the *Djebel* (Mountain), a group of herdsmen, squatting on some boulders of rock, hailed them :

" Ho ! there ! men ! where are you bound ? "

" We are bound to Constantine, " returned the Spahis.

" You cannot go beyond Châamah; the muskets of the *Ouled-Ascars* spoke last night, and two *Mokalis*[1] were killed.

The Lieutenant shrugged his shoulders incredulously. Only the day before yesterday officers of the *Bureau Arabe* at Djidjelly had been shooting in this group of mountains and had seen no signs of disturbance; he rolled a cigarette with all the calm assurance of five and twenty, and pursued his way.

He arrived without adventure at Châamah, and

1. Native horsemen attached to the service of the *Bureaux Arabes*.

rested there for two hours. But just as he was leaving the *Bordj* (Fort), he met the old Sheikh Ahmed, who rode up on his mule, having come on purpose to warn him.

" Turn back ! "

" I carry despatches, " the young Officer answered simply; and my orders are to present myself the day after to-morrow at the Divisional Headquarters.

" You go to your death ! "

* * *

The sun was low on the horizon when the horsemen began to climb the steep path leading to Fedj-el-Arba. The whole place was solitary and silent, and the gate of the Fort shut. A yellow-looking globe hung on one of the great folding doors, dangling from a nail.

The Officer at first thought what he saw was some bird of prey such as sportsmen often nail up on doors; but the Spahis, with eyes better pract-

ised in scrutinizing distant objects, made no such mistake.

" Allah empty my saddle ! " ejaculated one of them ; " Sheikh Ahmed said true, the dogs have begun their work ! "

And as F..., advanced slowly, he made out more and more distinctly the Khabyles' trophy : the shaved skull and distorted features of the head, the murdered man's eye with its slaty glare, his mouth twisted to one side, showing the great white teeth, and the short black beard all 'sticky with blood.

The small lock of hair carefully plaited that the Angel of Death is to grasp to bear the elect to the feet of God's throne, served to hang the head up by.

" Oh ! my children ! " cried the other Spahi, " we are come at a time when a man's head sits loose on his shoulders. I can already feel mine shaking, and the sword working between flesh and bone. The dogs have struck down a horseman of the *Beylik* ! Two spahis of Constantine will hardly over-awe them ! "

Close to, in the ditch under the bastion, lay two bodies wrapped in the blue burnouse. One had

a few handfuls of long grass where the head should be, thrown there to hide the naked gaping section at the neck, while the smashed skull of the other showed why it had been impossible to hang it also on the Gate.

" Look ! " the Spahi resumed, dismounting to examine the corpses, " they have been killed by a pistol shot fired point-blank, and they will do the same for us directly. These hill-men are as savage as the wild-boars of their own mountains. They have seen us come, and at this moment they are prowling in the *bush* and watching us. God help us ! there is nothing left but to abandon our baggage to them, and back at the trot to Milah. "

" We should not have gone a hundred yards, before Bou-Salem's men would have sent their bullets flying after us. I only wonder not to hear them whistling at our ears already. "

" Bou-Salem ! " exclaimed the Lieutenant; why ! I have a letter for him from the old Caïd Abderrahman. He said, " If you are passing through Fedj-el-Arba, go find the Sheikh Bou-Salem and greet him from me; he will welcome you as a son. "

And hunting through the pockets of his *djebira*, he brought out a letter.

" To be shot in the *bush*, or to have our throats cut in his *douar*, we have to choose between the two. Well ! let us try the chance; it is our only one. "

" You are right, Lieutenant ! Bou-Salem hates the Roumis, who slew his father and his brothers in the troubles with the Beni-Afeur; but he is a just man, and after all' tis God only is master of the hour ! "

" On then ! " and they began to descend the further slope of the tableland. Soon they saw in the hollow recess of the valley some thirty *gourbis* (huts) hidden behind thick hedges of cactus and aloes.

The French Officer at first glance supposed the village of the Khabyle chief abandoned, as not a single human form was visible; but he quickly understood the reason of the apparent solitude.

A gun-shot away, near a wood of olives, a group of a hundred men or so crowded round two or three figures that were gesticulating fiercely, while the women and children seated outside the press seemed to be listening eagerly to the proceedings.

But the Spahis had just been seen; men, women, children, sprang up, and the crowd bristled with long muskets.

Several men separated from the rest, and musket on shoulder, came slowly forward to meet the strangers.

These too could ride but slowly, for the path they had to descend was difficult. At length when they were not more than perhaps twenty paces from each other, the Officer shouted in Arabic:

" Where is the Sheikh Bou-Salem? "

" He is before you! " answered a man with a red beard, and of a savage, menacing look. " What is your will of him? "

" We would ask his hospitality. We have found the two *Mokalis* slain at the Gate of the *Bordj*. The place is not safe for a few men alone. We are come to rest our heads under your tent. "

" My tent! " returned the Sheikh, with astonishement. " Know you not....? "

" I am your guest, and ask no questions, " the Lieutenant interrupted. " Here is a letter from the Caïd Abderrahman. "

The Khabyle chief advanced yet nearer, and looked defiantly at the Officer; then taking the letter, he opened it, examined the seal without a word, then handed it to a young man who stood near, a reed-pen with its case and an ink-bottle in his girdle, he said :

" *Krodja*, read it. "

The *Krodja* (Secretary) read it in a slow monotonous tone :

" I send you Lieut. F.... He is my friend. Think it not enough to give the *alpha*-grass and the *diffa* to him and his; but be for him all the Prophet bids us be for strangers that come as friends. "

* * *

Meantime the people of the tribe had drawn near, and the women, ignorant of what was a-foot, screamed in chorus : " Death ! death to the Roumis ! and the hirelings of the Roumis ! "

At these cries the Sheikh turned upon them with a dark frown and angry eyes :

" Peace, women ! " he cried; " abuse is the last weapon of the vanquished. But our young warriors' pouches yet hold a good supply of powder and ball. These travellers come to us as guests, and we are bound to make them welcome. — Dismount, Sir ! " he went on, himself holding the Lieutenant's stirrup. " My house is yours; use it at your pleasure. So long as you shall sit beneath its shelter, you shall not know hunger nor thirst, and none shall harm one hair of your beard. "

The horses and the mule were taken into charge by willing hands, whilst the Chief led his guest to his *gourbi*, and the Khabyles stood round eager to learn what business brought the rash adventurers trespassing in the middle of a people in revolt.

" No business, " the Sheikh replied to their questions. " They are simple travellers that pass our way. "

Hearing this, they withdrew without a word.

It was with a lively apprehension of waking in another world that the Lieutenant of Spahis fell asleep; and his slumbers were full of dreams of blood and battle. When dawn came, he was surprised to find himself still alive and well. The

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Sheikh, bending over him, was shaking him by the shoulder and telling him to rise.

His horses ready saddled and the mule loaded were finishing their barley noisily, while the Arabs all ready for a start stood gossiping with the Khabyle tribesmen, sharing like brothers some olives and fragments of biscuit.

The Officer mounted, and was looking round for the Sheikh Bou-Salem in order to thank him, when to his surprise he saw him mount likewise and move off, followed by six horsemen.

" So ho ! " he said to himself, " he means to settle up accounts with me in some thicket of the *bush*, as soon as he thinks his duties as my host bind him no longer. "

But the Sheikh seemed to read his thoughts, for he turned round and said :

" I will go with you to beyond the crests of *Sidi-Khraled*, that bound the territory of my Tribe, for you might be insulted on the road, or worse. "

And as the Lieutenant, the two Spahis and the muleteer turned to descend the other slope of the *Djebel*, after having said farewell to the Khabyle horsemen, they looked back several times. They could see them on the crest of the mountain, full in

the morning sunshine, with muskets butted on thigh, watching their late guests as they defiled in peace and security along the highroad to Milah.

XIV

MILITIA UNDER ARMS

XIV

MILITIA UNDER ARMS

Bou-Akhas was advancing with contingents from no less than five different Tribes. The number of his force was estimated at four thousand foot, and at least two thousand cavalry; while every day, the further he penetrated Northwards, strong *goums* were continually joining him.

It was a direct and formidable menace to the little French colony. The horde must be turned back at any cost.

Taking with him every man he had available, the Commandant-in-Chief of the District hurried out to meet the enemy, and stop him before he could get clear of the defiles of the Souk-el-Djerid, leaving the town to the care of the civilian authority.

The place being stripped bare of regular troops, the militia at once entered into occupation; and the very same individuals, shopkeepers, publicans

and general dealers, who used to complain so bitterly of the insolence of the "regulars", now grew from day to day bigger swashbucklers than ever their predecessors had been.

At the same time their inordinate love of gold-lace and scarlet was positively grotesque. The last man of the rear-guard had barely filed out of the Town-Gate when they began to flaunt their uniforms through the streets and to put on all the airs and graces of the "Conquering Hero."

The battalion had long been on a war-footing — on paper, and every staff appointment filled. The battalion Major, Taupinard, a big, fat man, ruling spirit of the corner in bread-stuffs of the District, had ordered a complete uniform from a Constantine military tailor's the very day he was gazetted; and the other officers were not slow to follow so good an example. They all had their uniforms ready, but never an opportunity of putting them on! So it is not too much to say that, in spite of the injury the departure of the garrison inflicted on trade, they almost welcomed with acclamation Bou-Akhas' insurrection, — that gave them such a chance of showing off their new uniforms.

As to Non-Commissioned officers, — these they

appointed on the instant, enough for four Companies. But as they could only get together a hundred militiamen in all, — including twenty Jews who were pressed into the service in spite of their unwillingness, there were left over after subtracting Officers, Non-Coms., Corporals and Buglers only seven men to do the work in each Company.

These latter protested loudly and shrilly, declaring the battalion ought to be brought down to one Company. But the Officers, who at that rate would have almost all been reduced to the ranks, were as deaf as posts in that ear. They said the men wanted to disorganize the whole militia, traitors that they were to their country!

It was war time, they were on a war footing and must submit to martial law. Taupinard issued a stern warning in General Orders, declaring he expected "absolute and unconditional obedience." This he meant to have, by God! Else he would break his sword across his knee, and throw his badges in their faces. He could live without his pay, thank heaven! — not like those starveling fellows, his brother-officers in the "Regulars"! And for three days running, three times a day at each muster, the Quarter-master Sergeant of each

Company read over to his trembling men an extract from the Code of Military Justice, copied out of the hospital-orderly's red-book, which he had lent for the purpose :

Disobedience in the field.....	DEATH.
Striking a superior Officer.....	DEATH.
Deserting a post threatened by armed rebels.....	DEATH.
Attacking without orders.....	DEATH.
Making terms with the enemy.....	DEATH.
Taking command without orders.....	DEATH.
Surrender of a fortified position.....	DEATH.
Etc. Etc. Etc.....	DEATH.

The reading of this Draconian, but most necessary, Code was followed by that of a list of " external marks of respect " due to all Officers of superior rank; and in enforcing these Taupinard declared he would be *inexorable.*

" Very well, if that's it and we're going to be treated as soldiers, let's be soldiers right out ", " said the militiamen of the rank and file to one another.

They demanded, to begin with, four francs a day pay levied on the Native Tax, and proceeded to treat the town as if it had been a conquered country. However that the Natives might not confound them with the ordinary " licentious soldiery ",

every man decorated his plain militia cap with a silver band. Then began a life that was more like the harlequinade in a pantomine than anything else.

Worthy business men, quiet peaceable citizens at ordinary times, they now spent the whole day long in the taverns, drinking to each other's healths, and recklessly spending their little capital to the last farthing. Then at night they would troop off to visit the good-natured young ladies a certain matron of an obliging disposition had gathered round her to amuse the troopers when time hung heavy on their hands.

But — and this was strange and would have greatly surprised their lawful wives, if there existed such things as lawful wives at that date in the Colony, — the new made sons of Mars seemed to find themselves quite at home in these regions.

" Hilloa, Adèle, my dear ! "

" Oh, my ! why, it's little Blondinette. "

" Dolorès my darling, how goes it ?

" And you, my pretty; haven't I seen you before somewhere ? "

" Yes ! most noble warrior, at Constantine. Don't you remember ? at the old *Cat's Paw* ! "

Then ensued much shaking of hands and nudging of elbows, ejaculations and shrill cries, winding up with the quaffing of endless glasses of beer and liqueurs.

At first the girls laughed till their sides ached. But after a bit, spite of képi and uniform, or perhaps because of them, the militiamen failed to please the ladies. They had more money to give away than the troopers, it is true, but the girls found them more exacting and above all a great deal more pompous.

Finally, towards mid-night they would leave the liquor-stained tables of the temple of Venus, and full to the neck with liquor, their carcases gorged and puffy, drunk and battered and ridiculous, hand on hilt of their *cabbage-knife*, cap tilted over one ear, and all agog with the heady odours of the house they had just quitted, make their way towards the *casbah* by the longest road. They always went by the ramparts, under pretence of making sure their comrades, the sentinels, were at their posts, hailing them from afar, waking with their shouting the peaceable Bedouins asleep in the native cafés, stumbling and rolling, mimicking the mewing of cats and howling of jackals, giving out

on every note, each more excruciating than the other, the old night cry of warning in our African wars : " *Ho! sentinels, be ware, be ware* ! "

The Officers took possession of a café, — that kept by the fair Therèse, who had the reputation, if scandal was to be credited, of attracting the secret favours of the big guns of the garrison-staff. She was assisted by a younger sister, a damsel of fifteen, always very ready to bear a hand when there was a great press of business.

At such times as the Garrison Officers were on parade or away on duty, the settlers used to frequent the house, so that the fair Therèse had plenty of customers of all sorts and conditions. Such of these latter as had not been promoted to any superior rank in the battalion, naturally supposed they would be able to go on patronizing the establishment as before; but no! they found themselves face to face with their new-made superior Officers, who looked at them with anything but favour.

The pride of rank manifested itself instantly among these *nobodies*. Only yesterday had they become *somebodies*, but the less they deserved their advancement, the more pompous they were

over it. So they just ordered their subordinates to clear out, telling them they had no business there, the *staff* having selected the café for its exclusive patronage.

The poor militiamen protested indignantly, and the fair Therèse backed them up. General insubordination followed; and there was loud talk of military tyranny, and of jacks in office, and abuse of authority.

" They weren't, so to speak, in the *service*, hang it all! It was all very well for the army to set up these silly, anti-democratic distinctions between man and man. Come, come! weren't they all fellow-townsmen, all equals, all Frenchmen together? "

Eventually the men without badges and gold lace carried the day against the men with.

The Officers had to give in; so making the best of a bad job, they fraternized with their men, glass in hand, under the bright eyes of the fair Therèse.

The militia, officers and privates, stood on one and the same footing of good comradeship inside the doors of the good-natured Therèse, — who past mistress as she was of the arts of coquetry,

understood how to keep all her admirers sighing round her, promising her favours to each in turn without ever actually according them to any. Meanwhile the good ladies at home were furiously angry, — angry as outraged wives, angry as house-mistresses who see their little savings carried off to be spent abroad, angry as shop-mistresses who see custom going elsewhere.

So whilst the husbands were making sheep's eyes, twirling their moustaches and posing as devoted but despairing lovers, in fact doing their utmost to copy their *brother-Officers* of the Army, whom they scoffed at openly, envied secretly, and hated under all circumstances, their wives, those kill-joys of good fellowship, used to invade the public room and under pretence of calling out their husbands, look the fair Therèse up and down, and try all they knew to pick a quarrel without rhyme or reason.

The little nest of Cupid, once so calm and peaceful, became the scene of continual wrangles, and from morn to eve resounded with the angry words of shrill-voiced harpies. Therèse determined to have done with it, and closed her establishment.

When the militia Officers arrived next day at

absinthe time, lo! and behold, they found the front-door locked in their faces.

They knocked and knocked, — in vain. At last a head appeared at a window on the first floor, and the fair mistress of the house announced that since the militia gentlemen could not keep proper order, she proposed not to resume operations pending the return of " the regulars ". This reply, which triply insulted them, — as customers, as admirers, and as Officers, exasperated the worthy men to such a degree that they summoned her to open with dire threats of pains and penalties if she dared to refuse; " all civilians are bound to obey armed force, or — we shall *smash* your whole place! "

Therèse capitulated from sheer fright; and the visitors, heated by success, kept it up merrily till far into the night.

Then the angry wives agreed to take vengeance on their hated rival; and before long an opportunity offered of itself, as good opportunities almost always do.

II

The sun was blazing down on the ground, scorching the walls, parching the trees, blinding the passers-by, so that everybody made all convenient haste to get home and find a corner of shade and comparative coolness.

Arabs wrapped in their burnouses lay stretched under walls, at the corners of cross-streets, on mats in the Caouadji's. The Old Gate, a relic of Roman magnificence, was crowded with sleepers.

The militia sentinels, fighting against sleep, tramped up and down savagely on the bastions, rifle at the shoulder and eye alert, with the fixed idea that the enemy were advancing on the walls, and ready at a moment's notice to shoot the first Bedouin his evil star should bring within range.

Here and there a group of Frenchwomen were seated at their house door, talking together in low tones, as if afraid of waking the town that lay buried in a heavy slumberous calm of silent apathy.

But from the recesses of a shed attached to the *Casbah* came every now and again, like the snores of a heavy sleeper, the voices of the militia drill-

instructors pitched to resemble those of the army sergeants : " Present arms; — load; — one, two, three; — ground — arrrms ! " and the sound of the butts striking on the ground with a heavy thud.

" All one after the other, " thundered Captain Fournier, retired orderly-room Sergeant and principal baker in the place. " All one after the other, — and no life in it at all ! Now, all together ! "

And he set to work swearing and invoking the Almighty, as if the safety of the town and all its inhabitants rested on his solitary shoulders.

This was the moment when a company of twenty women or so made for the fair Therèse's establishment, facing the *Casbah*.

Big Mother Nassan, ex-Canteenwoman of Spahis, and now dealer in wines and groceries, was the leader of the band. She had, to use her own expression, " clapped half a dozen brandy-balls in her chops ", to get up the steam; and now puffing out her cheeks, slapping her thighs, rolling her wicked little eyes, she was calling her friends together :

" Come on, come on ! I'll show you the Moon at mid-day. I wager I'll upset the apple-cart all by

myself. Join the honest women's rights movement! " Then she tossed her huge, fat arms above her head, sleeves tucked up high above her elbows.

Next came M^me^ Fournier, the Captain's good lady, then all the rest of them, pale and eager-eyed, chock-full of naughty thoughts and indecent curiosity.

As wife of the Commander and most prominent citizen of the town, M^me^ Taupinard had refused to join the expedition openly, but she gave it her august countenance, and was there at the open window of her house encouraging the assailants.

These reached the door breathless and panting, treading on each others' heels, slipping along under shelter of the walls, not courting notice any more than necessary. Then so as not to startle the two sisters prematurely, they retired round the corner of a bye-street, leaving Mother Nassan to go forward alone and knock gently at the door, calling with honeyed accents :

" Mam zelle Therèse ! Louisette ! Come down and open, please. I want you. "

At the first-floor window appeared Louisette, *en déshabillé*, her pretty head touzled and her eyes heavy with the leaden mid-day sleep.

" I want to speak to your sister about something important, Quick, my pretty dear! open the door. "

But " my pretty dear " was suspicious, and as sly as anybody; so she answered :

" Tell me what it is from outside. "

" A message, — an important message, " replied Mother Nassan, who had provided herself with an old letter to be ready for any emergency. " They want an answer at once. "

But Louisette leaning well forward, caught sight of two or three women's heads craning eagerly round the corner of the street; so putting out her tongue at Mother Nassan, she shut to the window with a bang.

" You young minx, " screeched the old woman, " you shall pay me for that, you shall! "

Instantly the rest ran out all together, shouting with one voice : " Break down the door! break it down! "

Under their united and furious onslaught, the door soon gave way and they poured into the public room.

The two sisters were upstairs, slipping on their petticoats in frantic haste.

"Run", said Louisette, "it's you they're mad with!" and she dashed out on to the stairs to bolt the door of communication.

But Mother Nassan already had her hand on the door, and forcing it part way open with her knee, then pushing her foot into the crack, inserted her sturdy arm and seizing the child by one hand dragged her into the room.

"I've got the little pig by the ear," she screamed in triumph. We'll begin with her to get our hands in."

"Yes! spank her soundly. Hep! hep! now, up with her duds!"

"Hold her tight! I'm going to fetch the big one now."

Then Briquetas the butcher's wife, a sturdy dame, wife of Captain Briquetas of the Second Company, grasped the girl under the arms, forced her down, and seating herself on a bench, threw her across her knees. This done, she tucked up shift and petticoat above the child's waist, shouting to the furies standing round, "Now then, whose turn first!"

All the same she was burning with eagerness to have the first smack herself at the little slut, who

she declared had debauched her son, a great softy of twenty-five. However it took both hands to hold the victim, for Louisette struggled like a madwoman, burying her sharp teeth in the woman's thighs.

"Ah! the little devil, she bites and scratches. Spank, spank away then. Harder! thump the steak, and serve it up red and bleeding!"

In her fury she all but smothered the child between her enormous thighs, belabouring her head the while with her two fists.

Then the other women set to and beat her savagely. Each wished to do her share, and as they hurt their fingers, many of them took their slippers to it, and fell to furiously on the fresh young skin, laying on the harder in proportion, the older and plainer they were. Some cried:

"Higher, Madame Briquetas! legs higher; let's see the naughty place. Yes! that's where our husbands go, and our boys. They see nothing to be disgusted at. Now then, now! now!"

And all the while Captain Fournier's big voice, hoarse with swearing, was audible at intervals from the recesses of the *Casbah*:

"Shoulder arms; — present arrrms! No life

in it at all! Good God! no life at all! Now, all together!! "

III

While the townswomen were making it hot for poor Louisette, before the wondering eyes of a crowd of Arabs, who without trying to find a reason for it all, took a simple delight in watching the unexpected effect, Therèse, half crazy with fright, had by help of a little window slipped down on to the roof of a neighbouring Jew's house, and from there into the inner courtyard. Mother Nassan arrived only in time to see her victim escape, and finding it impossible to go in pursuit owing to her stoutness, contented herself with screaming after her, with foaming lips and heaving flanks, the long Litany of abuse and insult she had picked up in the different soldiers' canteens where she had spent the first three quarters of her life.

Like the wicked Princess in the Fairy Tales, the words poured from her mouth like toads and vipers, with a hissing loud enough to rouse the whole neighbourhood from its quiet midday siesta,

if the shouts of the furies from inside had not effectually done so already.

An old daughter of Israel, awakened suddenly and starting up from the arcade where she was asleep, caught a glimpse of the flying Therèse, and thinking the Roumis were attacking the house, began to scream as if she were being flayed alive, screeching to her family to come to the rescue.

She had received, had the old Jewess, a kick one day from a militia-man on the spree, and her eldest son a crack with a bludgeon from another "jolly fellow" who wanted to kiss the man's wife by main force. So, as you may suppose, the household was not exactly predisposed in favour of the Christian settlers, and greeted the stranger in terms that hardly promised a patriarchal hospitality.

Eventually they pushed her out into a back lane, where she set off to run with the idea of taking refuge under Monsieur le Curé's protection.

Though she was no Church-goer, still the good man would give her a smile and a pleasant "good-day to you", if ever he met her in some unfrequented place, and had even invited her several

times to come to the Presbytery. So she made for that haven, knowing her enemies would not dare to come and worry her there. Half naked, with hair flying, and like Cinderella losing one slipper by the way, she tore along the narrow streets of the Arab quarter, the natives crouched half asleep in the shadow of walls and under the awnings of shops watching the pretty vision fly by like one of the *houris* of Paradise.

But already the Furies were at her heels, shouting :

" There she is ! there, there !! stop her, stop her ! "

She came out on the Roman wall, kept along it without ever looking back, for she could hear them howling behind her like a pack of wolves, and fainting with exhaustion reached the little Square before the Church The sentinels on the remparts, startled by the tumult, raised a simultaneous cry of warning to each other, " Sentinels, look out ! look out ! " — which excited them so that every man let fly his musket at hap-hazard.

A hundred yards away stood the Presbytery much with its roof of blue slates, rising high over the neighbouring roofs and contrasting with their

red tiles. But to reach this harbour of refuge, the fugitive must follow a long white-washed wall, pierced half way along by a heavy door defended with iron bars and having a little barred *judas* in it, in fact like the wicket-gate of a convent or a prison.

Therèse had only a corner of the Square to cross now, when suddenly a half score of women seemed to rise out of the earth in front and bar her way. The pursuers had divided into two parties, and behind her the second band was now coming up in full cry.

Then, tracked down like a gazelle the hunters want to take alive, brain reeling and eyes swimming, faint and failing, she grasped the knocker of the suspicious looking door and knocked fiercely and hurriedly for admittance.

Her pursuers stopped dead in sudden astonishment, but directly cried out in loud-voiced triumph :

" Ha, ha ! bravo ! She's found her proper place, — the brothel, the public brothel ! "

This was the last thing she heard. A loud humming filled her ears ; she fell swooning to the ground, and saw as if in a dream a group of girls

naked but for a dressing-gown thrown round them lift her up and carry her in. Then a door shut to with a crash amid hooting and laughter from outside.

* * *

Women are very cruel to women. The female of every animal is fierce when enraged, but an angry woman is the most terrible of them all.

Every pretty woman has a legion of mortal enemies, — all the plain ones, whose intensest delight it would be to tear her limb from limb. When at the timber-yards of Versailles the hordes of *Communards* were driven in like sheep, all torn and bleeding, the women of the victorious faction used to come and poke with the tips of their parasols the raw wounds of the vanquished wretches. But above all it was against the women among the vanquished, marching there with the crowd, foul and dirty, with torn clothes and powder-blackened faces, that their rage burned fiercest, and if the *pétroleuse* happened to be young and pretty, they spat in her face and overwhelmed the shrinking creature with abuse, only prev-

ented by the soldiers on guard from using their nails.

Each epoch enjoys its own revenge. The records of the Great Revolution will be for ever fouled with the memory of the *tricoteuses* dancing their carmagnole over the bodies of the guillotined and slashing the white bosoms of the fair aristocrats with their scissors.

*
* *

But against the barred door the fury of the angry women broke in vain, falling off after a while into a dropping fire of insulting laughs.

They left off shouting defiance, the sense of triumph and satisfaction was too great. They seemed well pleased and happy at the accomplishment of a good work. Now more than ever did they long ardently for the instant return of the " regulars ", the *goums* first of all. They prayed that the soldiers, horse and foot, foul with sweat and hideous with dust and drought, athirst for love, hungry for sensual gratification, might this very day swarm into the house, and the fair The-

rèse might bear the first brunt of their furiouson-slaught.

Some of them could remember, after the last campaign, how a girl of the Nememchas appeared in a dying state at one of the entrances to the town, with bruised body and bleeding thighs, and ears torn from her head, who had suffered before she died the outrages of more than fifty horsemen of the Mag'zen, and gloated over the thought of such a fate for Therèse.

" Ah, ha! there she is in the house of ill fame, the pretty piece of affectation. She'll never leave it. No! she must never get out. We'll see to that. " And failing horrid Bedouins to do the job, failing the connivance of " a licentious soldiery ", they would have been happy to send fathers, brothers, husbands, sons, *en masse*, to ravish the creature, as did the women of the Beni-Ascars to the two maidens of the Ouchtatas.

But others again who now came up out of breath, consumed by a fierce desire to see the fair Therèse exposed in the open Square under the hands of the big butcher's wife, were keenly disappointed and cried to the girls looking out by the little window :

"Give her up. We want to tuck up her petticoats and whip her like her sister. We'll give her back, when we've done with her."

But the door remained close shut, the house silent.

The *gay women* made no answer to the honourable matrons. The wild-beast fury of the latter frightened them.

They carried in the swooning Therèse and laid her on the matron's bed, surrounding her with every care.

* * *

Meantime, at the sound of the dropping fire the sentinels let fly at their own sweet will, the two main-guards, consisting almost entirely of native Jews, had sounded the call to arms, and the militia, thinking an insurrection was toward, rushed headlong from the gate of the *Casbah*.

"No quarter!" shouted big Taupinard, who wisely kept in the rear, declaring his position of Commandant-in-Chief forbade him to run the risk of undue exposure to danger; else how could he direct and overlook operations with the needful calm?

They sallied out at the double; then seeing a large assemblage of Natives in the Square, who were indulging in endless comments on the entertaining event of the day, they dashed at them with fixed bayonets.

The crowd, startled and terrified, took flight in all directions, pursued by the militia-men, who deployed as sharp-shooters, with shouts of mutual encouragement and loud cries of victory.

The fugitives bolted for protection to the houses; but the troops followed them up bayonet in hand. Various scenes of the Rue Transnonain were now re-enacted, while up and down the streets was a second edition, in miniature, of the December fusilades :

> " A boy or two received a brace
> Of bullets in the head ".

And here and there, from the top of the walls, the sentinels would pick off a fugitive.

At the end of half an hour, the intrepid Taupinard, having by this recovered his presence of mind, stopped the firing and sounded the *assembly*. Not a man was missing at the roll-call.

" We've come off well ! The dangerous blackguards! " he said to his victorious soldiers.

There were loud complaints in the District, and the families of the victims demanded justice at every door of every Department; but the matter was judiciously hushed up.

All the blame was shifted onto the shoulders of a band of Bedouin robbers, unknown in the town, who taking advantage of a quarrel that had arisen between some women, and of the absence of the regular troops, had thrown themselves upon the militia, in order afterwards to murder the settlers and pillage the peaceful inhabitants.

As for Taupinard, his conduct was universally admired. He received as his New Year's gift the Cross of the Legion of Honour. Thus we see how merit and intrepidity are always rewarded.

XV

A MOONLIGHT SCENE

XV

A MOONLIGHT SCENE

The country of the Khabyles was afire, and the insurrection was spreading swiftly, — to Batna, to Setif, and Aumale. The " Fort National ", Dellis, Tigi-Ouzou, Dra-el-Mizan, Bougie, Bordj-bou-Arreridj, Milah, were all invested. Every farm and

lonely homestead was blazing, the colonists having fled, only too happy to save their skins. Things were at this pass when Colonel L...., Officer in command of the district of Bou-Saada and a man of energy, started out somewhat recklessly with a ridiculously inadequate column of Algerian Sharpshooters and Spahis, to collect the dues among the tribes of the *Beled-el-Djerid*.

The first Caïd to whom he applied refused point-blank to pay anything. Certain arrests had to be carried out, and next day two or three thousand Arabs, mostly from the district of Bou-Saada, advanced to attack our camp.

They were sent to the right about in double quick time. A Squadron of Spahis was despatched to cut down the fugitives; and meantime the Colonel sounded the recall to bring in the Sharpshooters. Then the gallant Turkos, with torn uniforms and blood-stained faces, dusty and horrible, but heroes for all that, fell in again by the colours. The sergeant-majors called the roster; some thirty men and two officers were found missing in the battalion.

" My lads! " said the Colonel, " I am pleased with you. But we must make haste and finish up

the business. If we don't make an end to-day, we shall have it all to do over again to-morrow, and to-morrow they will be *ten* thousand strong. "

The Turcos stood without moving a muscle, listening grimly. The colonel went on :

" While the Cavalry is riding down the rabble, you are to bring me in the heads of the slain. Come, my lads ! a dollar a head, a *douro* for every Bedouin head ! Fall out, and double ! "

Then turning to his officers who stood marvelling at such an order :

" The *Bureau Arabe* advises me numbers of Bou-Saada men are with the insurgents. We must strike a terrifying blow ; else we shall have to fight our way back into the town by the breach, with all the *Ksours* of the Mok'ram at our heels. "

* * *

Accordingly the Turcos with loud shouts scattered at a run over the battle-field. The chassepots had done fine execution, strewing the plain plentifully with brown bodies.

Sinister looking groups could be discerned here and there. The native soldiers, bending over with one knee on the ground, with one turn of the wrist would bare the dead man's head, when *chechia* or *haïk* still remained in place; then firmly grasping the mesh of hair every Mussulman wears on the back of the head, they set to work savagely with a sawing movement of the arm and howling like jackals, to ply the terrible sword-bayonet.

A bleeding globe in a moment or two rewarded their efforts, dangling from their left fist. Then they came running in to present their trophies, pitching the poor remnants of humanity onto an ever-growing heap before the *Kebir's* tent. The Sergeant Major handed each man a *douro* in return; and without stopping to recover breath, they would hurry back to their hideous work.

The money was that of the *achour*, the same which the Caïd of the Chabkas had insolently refused to pay over to the Colonel's emissaries. It had been seized by main force on the previous evening.

The heads, to the number of about 300, filled an artillery waggon, which was at once driven off at full trot for the town.

There was no pother that day either with prisoners or wounded, for any of the latter there may have been were found headless, — a clear gain of time and trouble for the Lieutenant-Surgeon, the guard and the ambulance-men.

* * *

Under escort of a small detachement of Spahis the waggon entered Bou-Saada about midnight by the South Gate, and came to a standstill with its dismal load in the great Square.

The town was fast asleep, under guard of a section of Turcos. These were promptly and noiselessly called up and directed to hold themselves ready, rifles loaded and knapsacks on back.

A fatigue party hurriedly pointed the ends of three hundred long tent-pegs, and drove them in in three concentric circles round the great Fountain, and on these they stuck the heads.

The artillery waggon tipped them out in batches as they were wanted, making little heaps of

ghastly, sticky, shapeless globes, covered with clotted blood and patched with blobs of red mud.

In their hot haste and their greed to make all they could, the men had cut the heads from the bodies anyhow. The awkward squad had slashed and hashed in vain efforts to find the joint of the cervical vertebrae; while others, not taking the trouble to look for it, had hacked through the bone by main force. Necks horribly cut about showed some of the wounded had struggled desperately; in these cases their executioners, exasperated at resistance that put unexpected difficulties in their way and doubled their trouble, frantic with haste and rage, had struck ten foul blows for one good one, so that the flesh hung in strips with fragments of skull attached and straggling tendons, like the trailing ends of a ragged cloth or a row of setons all sticky with adhering matter.

The moon, hidden till now behind the tall palms of the Oasis, now suddenly came out, and lit up the hideous scene, shining down brilliantly on livid, ghastly faces, mouths still open in a grin of hate, teeth still clenched in a last effort to bite, noses smashed in by the shocks and jolts of fifteen leagues of rough road.

Here an eyeball had started from its socket, and dangled over the lips, looking in its dulled glitter like a tarnished agate, while the other eye, wide open, seemed to be gazing horrified into space.

There a head, driven home over roughly on its spike, was impaled right through, a splinter of wood coming out through the skull above the eyebrows and making a gory horn; close by was another cracked by a blow with the butt, from which the brains were trickling, like marrow oozing from a bone.

Little streams of blood crawled slowly drop by drop down the stakes, congealing on them in long gluey threads. White, longhaired dogs with lean, thick-set bodies, and big drab-coloured greyhounds, prowled round the human shambles, trying to lick the red blotches; but others kept their distance, and stood a few yards off, howling dismally.

Presently the dawn broke over the dreadful place; and with the rising sun opened another day, — a day of horror and terror and despair [1].

1. Shocking as it undoubtedly is, we must not forget that this style of warfare is quite common amongst the warriors of the Soudan. Pierre Loti, in his *Roman d'un Spahi*, has

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* *

The women, who had risen the earliest to draw their water at the fountain, were first to see the horrible sight.

drawn a vivid picture of the defeat and *dephallicisation* of a native regiment of Senegalese sharpshooters officered by Frenchmen, and in *Untrodden Fields of Anthropology* (Paris, 2 vols. 2nd edit. 1898), the student will find further facts and details. These things are never divulged *at home* and only men who have been " through the mill ", Know what takes place. When however, as in the case of General Kitchener at Omdurman, orders are given to retaliate in the native way, the better to quell revolt and stop greater bloodshed, a loud outcry as to English cruelty and return to barbarism is made by pressmen in Fleet street, in utter ignorance of the nameless atrocities wrought by *the adverse side.*

Loti paints the nameless horror of being only wounded that haunts the soldier fighting in these parts : he much prefers to be killed and die outright. The object of the natives in thus *demembering* their fallen enemies is perfectly logical from their point of view, viz : — that anything less than depriving a man of the outward sign of virility was not to gain a complete victory over him; that only after the exciion of the genital apparatus could he be regarded as really vanquished. *Men have been known to survive the cruel and dastardly operation.*

For a moment they were lost in sheer amazement and stood speechless, unable to grasp the reality, thinking themselves the sport of some horrid nightmare; but soon having drawn closer, they broke out suddenly into piercing screams.

The whole place was awake in an instant, and at the same moment the Turco bugler, standing in the Square, sounded the reveillée.

The cheerful notes rang out with an incongruous suggestion of holiday-making amid these dismal scenes, while the women, growling like a pack of wolves, revolved in a sort of *dance of death* round the grisly trophy.

One would recognize a brother, another a husband, yet another a father or a son.

Some unable to make out the features, would wipe the dead face with the skirts of their *gandourah*, or with their finger-nails scrape away the clotted accumulations of mud and blood.

The men arrived in their turn, keeping a savage, silent mien. Many clenched their fists and shook them threateningly at the invisible foe.

Then they raised a simultaneous chorus of loud fierce shouts, and presently fell silent again. The detachment of Turcos still stood motionless in the

Square, their grim looks contrasting strangely with the gay sky-blue uniforms they wore, and waited with rifles at the ready; the Spahis were also at attention, with swords drawn.

Presently, far away, the ringing clash of the bugles made itself heard, coming nearer and nearer, sounding the *quick-step*.

At this the old Caïd mounted his charger, and followed by his Sheikhs clad in the scarlet burnouse sallied from the town to meet the approaching column.

When he was within ten paces of the Colonel, who rode so gallantly, hand on hip, with a magnificent recklessness, there at the head of his handful of men, in the midst of a People in revolt, he dismounted and throwing himself on his knees, touched the Frenchman's stirrup with his long white beard :

" You are stronger than we, " he said simply. " It was written so from the beginning. "

And in this way, in those last days of January when all Northern Africa was a-blaze, the treason of Bou-Saada was nipped in the bud, and with it the insurrection of the *Ksours* of the Mok'ran.

Verily the ways of a soldier are not as the ways learned in lawyers' offices.

Enough! and to wise men, greeting!

XVI

THE COMPLAISANT HUSBAND

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THE COMPLAISANT HUSBAND

Veterans of the regiment remember to this day old father Étienne, of the café *L'Étoile d'Honneur*, with his fat churchwarden's smile, his foxy face and general look of a good, complaisant husband and past master in the art of winking the other eye. This he could do with the best of them, and indeed he had enjoyed first-rate practice, for golden-haired M^me^ Étienne, in the days of her youth and beauty, had many and many a time, — oftener than she could count, merrily kicked her little heels over the traces. In this way the erstwhile humble bar-keeper, retailing fiery spirits at two sous a glass to thirsty loafers over the zinc of a tavern counter, had blossomed into the substantial landlord of a fine café, a sworn juror, a " prominent citizen " and an alderman of the town.

The *Étoile d'Honneur*, regimental café of all the Cavalry Officers of the Garrison, by itself consum-

ed more absinthe, vermouth, liqueurs and ale than all the taverns in the place put together. The squadrons took up quarters one after the other, and never failed to pass on the watchword : " Good liquors, reasonable charges, mistress a good sort, husband inoffensive. "

Yes! quite inoffensive! The " green-eyed monster " had never tortured the worthy man's heart in the least. *He* was not one of those husbands, made to be laughed at, who lodge their honour in the most fragile of all caskets, and then when this is broken open, get a hole shot through their bodies to soften their regret and soothe their indignation. He was universally known as " the complaisant husband. "

Yes! he wore his crown of horns complaisantly and comfortably, — and a fine pair of antlers they were, with many tines. He was content to live and let live, to breathe the smoky air of the *salle*, to superintend the waiters, to watch his noisy customers crowding round the tables and enjoying the brilliant lights, the flashing mirrors, and the plump charms of the mistress of the house.

But, alas! time flies. However gently the years

glide over pretty faces, at last they wear furrows on the smoothest brow. Forty summers and more had coarsened the charms of the fair hostess, but she had no thought just yet of giving up.

There were defaulters in the ranks to remind her that nothing is eternal in this world. The house still flourished more or less on its former reputation; the watchword was still passed on, but in a modified form : " Good liquors, but old lady passée! " Alas, alas! fair ladies, 'tis what we must all come to!

And lo! and behold, two little minxes, pretty girls, seductive looking and not a bit shy, proceeded to open a rival establishment right opposite, to attract the custom of the Officers.

" A couple of arrant dollymops, " was Mme Étienne's comment, " draggle-tails coming nobody knows where from, and not a shift between the pair of them! I wonder the police allow such doings!

Bah! for what we wanted of them, a formal certificate of good character and exemplary life together with a letter of recommendation from the Curé of their parish would not have helped us one single button, and a shift was quite super-

fluous. Up anchor and away! the old port of call was left all but deserted. The *Étoile* kept only some very young admirers of mature charms, and a few besides, old customers " faithful in adversity "

* * *

At this crisis M^me^ Étienne bethought her she had a niece, abandoned since earliest infancy to the pious care of the nuns at the Female Orphanage, quite forgotten and left unthought of till this moment. She would now be sixteen, — and possibly the girl had grown up pretty. Inquiries were made, and a reply duly received. Then M^me^ Étienne undertook a journey on purpose to recover her dear little Mélie, who not having one sou to rub against another was given up to her with the utmost alacrity by the worthy *sisters*.

She brought her home in triumph, furnished with every mark of satisfaction the pious ladies could bestow, and wearing all the ornaments our good mother the Church lavishes on dear, devout girls, chokefull of prayers, — and vicious thoughts, with downcast eyes and lips mod-

estly closed, — but the modesty began and ended there! Oh! the sly little darling! how plump and rosy-cheeked and fresh-coloured she was, how timid, and blushing, and virgin-pure!

"One for our worthy Curé," the wags cried to father Étienne.

"Not she!" the latter replied, with a wink, "she's meant for sinners, not saints!"

* * *

The sweet child, with her rounded arms, her dainty, satiny skin and her dreamy eyes!

True the figure was coarsish, — but then the curves were so full and the flesh so firm. She had rather a big mouth, — but then it had such red, red lips; the hands may have been a trifle large, but the hips were so ample too. A bit flat-footed may be, but then *such* plump calves!

Her arrival created quite a stir. "Ah, ha! the delicious morsel of holy bread, all fresh and piping hot, — wouldn't you just love to set your teeth to it, good sirs!" seemed to be papa Étienne's sentiments. "Walk up, walk up! no

charge for inspection. Pass the word, pass the word on ! "

So all the world came trooping in, and admiring. They were giving their eyes a preliminary treat, before treating their..... well ! their heart, let us say. They duly passed the word, and more came, and more, and again and again, and seemed never to get tired of looking. The seats were all full up again, the tables groaning with glasses and jugs and decanters and tumblers, and saucers piled mountains-high, in honour of Mélie's bonny face.

Never was seen such a hit ; never in all the annals of garrison life had such a deluge of customers been known in any café. Customers stood in line before the doors ; customers had to be refused admission for want of space. Étienne, his wife, Mélie, did their best, and could not cope with the traffic. With one accord the Officers all made sheep's eyes at the dear orphan, the pretty nun, the irresistible novice. They declared she must dress the character, at the very least she must keep to her convent costume with the big medallion of the Sacred Heart. Étienne made no objections ; he even seemed to think it an excellent

idea, his delighted eye the while following his pretty niecea bout and noting her voluptuous movements. " Oh ! a sweet girl, if ever there was one, a sweet girl ! " he kept repeating under his breath.

But Mme Étienne would not hear of such *sacrilege*. " No ! no ! it was not right ; we mustn't mock at religion ". So she had a most becoming frock made for Mélie, and lent her her own rings, bracelets and ear-drops. " They shall be yours, your very own, " she said, " if you behave nicely. "

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* *

The enthusiasm lasted six weeks, during which the establishment over the way was left utterly behind. The two pretty girls, its mistresses cried with vexation.

" Odious ! " they said, " send for their niece from her convent, — to sell her to the soldiers ! How can the police allow such doings ? "

But after a while lo ! the rush began to slacken little by little. In proportion as the *Étoile* emptied, the rival house was crowded. Not that Mélie had

grown a whit less attractive or plump or pretty. It was all father Étienne's fault; the fact is his virtue was getting positively ferocious. Étienne "the complaisant" seemed to have gone demented. He had constituted himself guardian in chief of public morality, and Cato the Censor was a joke beside him. "A young girl..... entrusted to my care!" he was for ever saying. Good-bye to the highly spiced innuendos, broad jokes, *double entendres*, music-hall songs, so dear to the trooper's soul. The *Étoile* was grown into a "school of polite deportment;" a boarding school miss might have joined the circles of Spahis and Chasseurs d'Afrique round the marble-topped tables, and never known a blush!

Well! customers yawned fit to crack their jaws, while the landlord, once so inoffensive, used to eye his guests with such furious looks of jealousy, and keep so strict a watch over the virtuous Mélie, that at last, deeming it impossible to carry a fortress so straitly guarded, the besiegers one and all beat a retreat.

The Café de l'Étoile became a solitude once more; and henceforth poor Mélie had to put up with many a rough word from her disappointed

aunt. Neither did the latter fail to rate her husband in good set terms, who had put the child's admirers to flight with his ridiculous straightlaced nonsense.

"What!" he would retort with his fine air of virtuous indignation, "a young girl..... entrusted to my care. Never!"

The good little girl was at her wits' end, and cried her eyes out in every corner of the house. What made her case all the harder was that, as a good girl should, who is anxious to make up for lost time, she had already made her choice among the most pressing of her suitors. There was a round dozen at least who were very much to her taste, and in spite of her stand-off ways, she was only too eager to try some more tasty sweetmeats than ever the good sisters had provided.

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Who can't have thrushes must needs make blackbirds do; a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush; a sparrow in the pot is better than a partridge on the wing. Perhaps it was in virtue of these various proverbs, in which is crystallized the

wisdom of the nations, that one fine morning la mere Etienne discovered uncle and niece in a close conversation, so close there could be no sort of doubt of the matter in hand between the pair.

" Abandoned wretch ! " she screamed, " a young girl..... entrusted to your care ! "

Mélie, after being soundly trounced, was sent back to the Convent by the first train ; the Café de l'Etoile was put up for sale, and became the property of the two pretty minxes over the way, — and the moral is, " Virtue is always rewarded. "

XVII

SECRETS OF THE DESERT

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Whether the roof above be the blue firmament of heaven or the starry vault of night, the gilded dome of the Kouba or the green arch of festooned

vines with their oval clusters, dances the most wanton possess in these Southern lands a certain Biblical grandeur.

The Arab even in his monstrous vices is seldom base or vulgar. The lust of the flesh may overcome him, passion undo him, fierce longing choke him, — in all his degradation the part he plays is the lion's, never the cur's. He has a way of his own even of shaking out his rags to rid him of his vermin that is totally unlike the gestures of the lowsy European crowd; in his very crimes and hideous vice and abject poverty, he bears unabashed the the proud mark of Cain on his brow.

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* *

One evening I remember, the festivities were verging to a close, as the setting sun plunged into a great bank of crimson clouds in the West. The horizon glowed like some scene in Fairyland, the vast spaces of the blazing desert sands melting imperceptibly into the vast spaces of the blazing heavens.

Sodom and Gomorrha and all the rest of the doomed Cities of the Plain might have been there,

quenching the slowly dying embers of their conflagration in the Lake of brimstone.

Intoxicated with food and *hashish* and love, stretched full length on a mat of *alpha*-fibre, my back resting against my saddle, I lay dreaming with half-shut eyes.

At this moment *Braham Chaouch*, the old swordsman, laid his hand on my arm.

"Look yonder;" he said.

"Let me be! what can I look at fairer than the setting sun there? The maids of the *Ouled-Nayls*[1] have dazzled my eyes and stolen my heart away.

1. We have already noted these folk, a tribe of partly nomadic Arabs whose women — of rare physical beauty — deliberately devote themselves to prostitution to earn themselves a dowry. Their beauty is all the more conspicuous owing to the ugliness of their neighbours, the negresses and Bedawin women. Prince F. Lubomirski, in his little book, *La côte Barbaresque et le Sahara* (Paris, 1880) fitly remarks. "These prostitutes expert in vice, living in debauchery until the age of twenty years and then commencing an existence of duty and self-abnegation, would strike us as an anomaly in nature, if we did not reflect how greatly the principle of convention enters into the delimitation of good and evil". The fact is the love of the Oriental is entirely sensual and those beautiful spiritual imaginings which often sway and sanctify a European's passion, play no part in his sexual philosophy. He tabulates the physical attractions of his mistress with charm-

They are gone now, taking their tents with them; I would fain fall asleep and forget, — to the thud, thud of the singing-men's drums ".

" Nay! wake up, and look. Dancing women, — well! you may give your eyes their fill of them in every city of the country; but the sight you may see now is not so common. "

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* *

And through the clouds the fumes of tobacco and *kiff* and powder had left behind floating in the tent, I saw file past, one by one, silent and ghostlike, the *Frechiche* dancers.

" Leave ye dancing to the women, " the Prophet has commanded! " the dancing man is a laughing-stock, and treadeth his own dignity beneath his feet, as one that leapeth on a carpet. "

However, it is not solely by their dancing that the *Frechiches* tread their dignity underfoot. They

ing frankness and sometimes real beauty of language, (as in " The Scented Garden " of Sheikh Nafzawih), and his lust refuses to bother over psychical ditinctions.

shave their faces, as did the priests of Cybelé of old, — a thing of itself sufficient to make them the scorn of every Arab; and they don the long robe of the Moorish women, drawn in over the hips by the *foutah* of striped silk. Their wrists and ankles are loaded with bracelets and bangles, and some of the younger of those who passed before me wore great silver earrings in their ears. Their head-gear was the turban of the Koulouglis.

They ranged themselves in a semi-circle before the Caïd's tent; then to the strains of the *tarbouka* and a sort of Pan's pipe a young camel-driver played with marvellous adroitness, one of their number stepped forward and proceeded to go through the licentious mimicry the courtesans of the Souf exhibit. Soon another joined him, then a second couple, and presently all mingled in a wild, wanton *chassé-croisé*, where each dancer made lewd gestures to his *vis-à-vis*.

Otman the Caïd and his Sheikhs sat on their heels looking on, a smile of contemptuous scorn on their lips. Horsemen of the *goum* and Spahis wrapped in their red burnouses filled the background of the tent, and made a ring round the dancers, their bronzed faces and manly soldier-like

features offering a strange contrast to the pallid brows and sickly countenances of the wantons.

I seemed to be looking on at King David and his troop of Jewish striplings performing their lewd dance before the Ark under the astonished eyes of the Gentile warriors.

Close by a white goat was suckling her young one. The kid kept digging his pink muzzle vigorously into the swollen udder, then drawing back with the teat still in his mouth, he would knock against the elbow of the *tam-tam* player, who would gently push the little creature away. Tall greyhounds, tawny-coloured savage looking beasts, prowled round the tent and kept creeping up stealthily to sniff at the strangers.

* * *

The night was closing in. The fiery furnace of the West was dying down, and with it the red-hot ruins of the wicked Cities were crumbling into nothingness and momentarily disappearing.

Laden with the heady scent of vegetation

scorched all day long in the burning sun, the night wind sprung up and blew into the tent.

The darkness grew apace. Candles the boys had lit here and there were extinguished, and suddenly the player of the *tarbouka* left off beating his fingers on the parchment. A reed flute struck up an air soft and sad as a eunuch's womanish voice; the dancers stopped out of breath, and one of the despicable crew sang a love song to a slow, languishing rhythm. Then all sat down at a little distance off round a fire of charcoal that glowed red in the twilight, passing round tiny cups of coffee and pipes of *hashish*.

The gleam from the brazier threw ruddy reflections, that looked like blood, on their pallid faces[1] marked with the stamp of ignoble indulgence,

1. It is worth noting that Sir R. F. Burton has also called attention to the pallid face of the paederast. Nature seems to have set her stamp upon him. But it must not be at once concluded that every pallid countenance is a sign of unnatural practices. The student should consult Burton's article at the end of the 10th vol. of the " nights " ; or The Book of Exposition in the Science of Co***n " (Paris, 1896) where the article is given *in extenso*. It is only fair to remark that Colonel***, the erudite and far-travelled author of " Untrodden Fields of Anthropology " denies the correctness of Burton's theory and states that he has

and presently some of the horsemen of the *goum* glided to their side.

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But now a confused sound makes itself heard, a sound of far off voices and footsteps. All hear it and listen keenly, while the *Frechiches*, with outstretched necks and anxious eyes, peer into the void, gazing towards the Oasis.

But their leader hailed the Caïd, crying:

" Caïd ! it was our bargain that no women should be present. "

There was a deep hush as at the approach of danger and disaster! then the Caïd answered :

known many men, habitual " actives and passives " of this incomprehensible propensity, who were by no means of a pallid complexion. If more exact information be required the reader should consult " The Sexual Instinct and its Manifestations from the Double Standpoint of Jurisprudence and Psychiatry ", by Dr B. Tarnowsky, of St. Petersburg. Translated by W. C. Costello, Ph. D., and Alfred Allinson, M. A. Oxon, Paris, 1898 : Charles Carrington, 8vo. Pp. xxiv-232.

" By the head of the Prophet, I swear ! Not a man is there amongst us all so brazen of brow, so lost to shame, as to summon here wife or sister. A man's heart is ribbed with triple oak, his hide is thick ; there is nought he cannot face without great hurt. But a woman is tender as a rose leaf ; a woman is fouled by the very least contact of foul things. They you hear approaching are not women of our villages. They come uninvited ! "

At these words, Spahis, Chaouchs, Mokalis, Goums, all set up a laugh.

The *Frechiches* on the contrary thought it no laughing matter. Hurriedly they tossed pots and pans, carpets, tents, tent-pegs, provisions, pell-mell into their great camel's hair *sahas*, and in frantic haste loaded these on the mules[1].

But before they had time to hoist themselves on top of the loads, — for infamous, effeminate beings, they were forbidden to bestride the noble

1. The hatred of whores — (honest, healthy-minded women are happily ignorant of these things) — for " gentlemen " of this category is only equalled, by the mortal aversion shown by these hybrid males to women's society, and their fear, at once ludicrous and contemptible, of the terrible outspokenness of the *dames du trottoir*. The writer recalls when thrown by chance into the company

animal, to defile the horse, the warrior's mount, — fifteen or twenty women accompanied by huge hounds, Slouguis of the famous man-eating breed, rushed at them like frenzied bacchantes uttering ear-piercing yells. They were the courtesans of the fraction of the *Ouled-Nayls*, who had the day before pitched their tents on the domain of the Oasis, and had been encamped there since.

Armed, some with sticks, some with knotted blackthorns, others with potsherds full of human excrement, they fell on the fugitives, belabouring them might and main, and setting the dogs at them.

"Tear 'em, good dogs!" they yelled, "tear 'em! tear 'em! The filthy, abominable wretches!"

And then was seen a strange sight, a never to be forgotten sight away there in the wilds of the *Beled-el-Djerid*: a rout of smoothfaced men, dres-

in Paris of the Lucifer whose fall from the firmament of London literature set all the world's tongue awagging, the great dread our man of genius manifested at penetrating into a *chic salon* where a number of *demi-mondaines* where known to congregate and of his absolute refusal to accompany us there. We were going purely on a visit of curiosity. He had just directed most libertine smiles and glances towards two filthy little match-vendors at the door!

sed out in women's clothes, angry women and savage dogs at their heels, tearing away in panic fear through the night, across the Desert sands.

XVIII

MY FIRST LION

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MY FIRST LION

I

In those far-off days, — and woe is me ! how far-off they are now, — when the blue-striped turban bound my brow, and my shoulders were draped in the red burnouse so many heroes have made illustrious, when the double chevron of gold-lace decked my sleeve, for a year I combined with the duties of my own rank those of quarter-master-in-charge within the walls and the four-teen flanking towers of the old Roman fortress of Tebessa.

This detail would not have deserved mention, only that it was as officer in charge I came to deal with the Headman of the Chaouchs. This procured me the acquaintance of his daughter, little Kreïra, a brunette with lips positively as red as blood, and, — mark how one thing always leads to anoth-er, — *to kill my first lion.*

For eight or ten months past, ever since our return from duty at a *smala* (outpost fort). we had been in garrison in the town, killing time as best we could. The Nememchas never gave us a thought, — they might never in all their lives have cut off a soldier's head or a Colonist's; the Sidi-Abid paid no attention to anything but their crops, the Ouled-Recheia did not stir a finger. The very brigands on the Tunisian frontier seemed to have passed the word round to leave us alone to stagnate in deadly idleness. The Kroumirs had not been discovered yet; the Native Department Offices were fast asleep.

A period of utter peace and quietness, but at the same time of unspeakable boredom.

A man could not in common decency spend all day in drinking absinthe, — and all the more as credit ran short in direct ratio with the diminishing chances of a foray. Something had to be done to fill the time, and the sporting instincts of many of our number became abnormally developed. The total of jackals, hyaenas, wild boars, rabbits killed was beyond count. Senseless slaughter of the innocents, childish massacre of unoffending beasts, — and indeed we were heartily sick of this

miserable small game! Failing Bedouins to hunt down, we began to dream of lion-shooting.

How fine it sounded! The hope, fondled many a time on long evenings round the bivouac-fire, woke again beneath the shade of the inn-arbour where we supped our *grog* after the evening meal.

Jules Gérard of *ours* was dead, but he had left behind him stirring memories among his comrades; the name and fame of Bombonel reached us now and again, and last but not least the renown of the famous Ahmed-ben-Omar.

* * *

It must be admitted however that even in those days lions, no less than forays, were becoming scarce phaenomena; soon there would be none left, in all probability, either of the one or the other. In spite of frequent expeditions into the plains, and though we beat the ravines and woods of the Djebel-Dir industriously, so far we had only once encountered the King of Beasts.

It happened one sunny morning in a hollow way that zigzagged up between rocks overgrown

with brushwood. We were on our way to the wedding of a Sheikh of the Tribe to which the Caïd Ali-ben-Ali, lieutenant in our squadron, belonged. Ali himself rode at the head of a dozen Spahis and twenty or thirty horsemen of his *goum*.

The green and yellow flag of this Tribe fluttered gaily on the morning air, while a band of Musicians with melodious, strange looking instruments played a triumphal march of war and love.

Suddenly the Caïd's horse stops dead, then starts back snorting, and not even the spur will make him advance another step. The animals that follow snort and stop in their turn, and the panic spreads from front to rear of the whole column.

"Ah, ha!" exclaims Ali, "I see what it is. Look yonder!"

And with pointing finger he shows me a tawny lion, big and strong, crouching on a rocky boulder, two or three yards above our heads.

Two quartermaster-sergeants put their sights on him; but the Caïd with extended arm, and in his soft, quiet voice says: "Nay! leave him in peace, my sons. He leaves us in peace; and indeed his skin is not worth the value of the horses he will rip up for us, after you've missed him."

So the column filed past under the lion's calmly scrutinizing gaze.

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Apart from the pleasant excitement a scuffle in the narrow defile would have occasionned, I was glad enough they had not fired on the magnificent creature. Truly a noble beast, that it would have been a crying shame to drill holes through with our bullets. And then, as Ali observed, he was watching us so calmly going on our way, like a peaceable Bedouin seated at his tent-door watching the Christian soldiers go by.

But when I got back and related our little adventure to Kreïra, her eye gave a scornful flash. She made a face of contempt, pouting out her lip, that was redder than the pomegranates of the oasis when they burst in the sun with over-ripeness, and asked me coldly :

" Why did you not kill him? *My* heart shall never belong but to a man who has killed a lion "

Such was her fancy, cruel girl ! Still perhaps

we must forgive the child! she was only fifteen, and that is,

An age that knows no pity.

In later years. in the Corridas of Seville and Granada, I have seen little slips of girls in short frocks, cheeks pale with excitement and eyes a-blaze, demanding with loud cries the death of the savage hero of the ring.

* * *

Amongst my many other miscellaneous duties was that of seeing that every Native on his way through, if unconnected either with the Army or with the Native Department services, should leave his arms with the guard at the Gates, — a very necessary precaution at a date when the Arabs never travelled without a whole armoury of deadly weapons, and when, especially on market-days, the place swarmed with Bedouins from the neighbouring Tribes.

The Sergeant of the Guard was responsible and restored the objects deposited when their owners quitted the fortress. But it somehow or other

happened that a certain number of specially valuable muskets and *yatagans* changed ownership. A. who deposited a *moukala* (long-gun) with barrel of damascened steel-work and butt ornamented with artistically carved ivory mountings, when he came to reclaim his property could find nothing but an old blunderbuss without cock or lock, obviously from the stock of some dealer in old iron; B. who had given in a silver-hilted *kandjar*, could see nothing on his return but a butcher's knife with a handle of common horn. I should of course be sorry to accuse the Zouaves told off to guard the Gates of these malpractices, though two or three *were* caught in the very act of trafficking with Jew brokers! Still to put an end to these little tricks, which they looked upon merely as good practical jokes to play off on the *Arbicos*, I ordered all arms for the future to be conveyed to the General Armoury. There a receipt was given, on presenting which the owner received his weapon back and went on his way rejoicing.

A few days later, an Arab, quite poorly clad, handed over to one of the clerks a magnificent sporting-gun, struck by the beauty and value of

the weapon and the marked contrast between it and the plainness, not to say squalor, of the bearer's dress, I took it from the clerk's hands to examine it more closely.

It was a " Lefaucheux " of damascened steel, rifled and double barrelled, worth seven or eight hundred francs.

" Who does it belong to? " I asked the man, cocking and uncocking the piece as I spoke.

" It is my own ! "

I had been surprised to see a gem of such value in the possession of a *Chaouia* ; but the vigour of the man's face and expression surprised me still more. There could be no doubt I was face to face with one of those intrepid robber chiefs who used to blackmail the frontier villages, and who would slip across the border backwards and forwards when pursued. The weapon was of course part of the plunder won in some murderous exploit !

" Yours ! where did you buy it ? "

" I did not buy it. It was a present from the Sidi General. "

" What ! General Desveaux ? "

" You have named him. "

General Desveaux was Commandant-in-Chief

of the Province of Constantine, the sa me General of Division who some years later, when the dark days came, was destined to command the Guards. It was not precisely in his line to be distributing guns by Lefaucheux to the Bedouins, least of all to Bedouins in ragged burnouses; but the fellow resumed :

" My name is Ahmed-ben-Omar. [1] "

1. Ahmed-ben-Omar was well known throughout a circuit of fifty leagues in the Province of Constantine. His people, originally from the Kef, had come and settled, some time previous to the French occupation, in the neighbourhood of Souk-Arras.

Ahmed-ben-Omar, warned one day of the coming of the Préfet, was enabled to present himself before the great man with an enormous lion which he had killed the day before in company with his pupil Bel Kassey-ben-Salah. He received a gold medal as a reward for his prowess.

His campaigns have been almost invariably crowned with success: still he has been several times wounded. One day he was carried back at death's door to Souk-Arras, along with a lioness he had shot, but which before succumbing, had given him twenty-two wounds. He was seven months in hospital.

No sooner set on his legs again than he started off once more to scour the woods. He killed nearly 80 lions and 40 panthers during his life.

In January 1887 he received the cross of the Legion of Honour.

Ahmed-ben-Omar died, aged seventy, from the effects of a congestion of the lungs.

A moment, and he added unassumingly, thinking the name unknown to me :

" I am a lion killer. "

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I looked the man over admiringly without a word. Spare and sinewy, with steady, steely eyes, he was the *beau idéal* of his iron race, — that lives on nothing, scorns pain and laughs at death. His bronzed countenance was framed by a short, black beard, streaked with a few threads of grey. He was a man of about forty, and his record was — fifty lions.

" Nay ! keep your gun, " I said ; it is a badge of honour. You have earned the right to carry it anywhere. "

He thanked me with a gesture.

" You have come to shoot in the District ? "

" Yes ! I have just arrived from Souk-Arras. Men of the Nememchas came in to tell me, " There is a lion has made his lair in the forest of Alloufa. For a week now he has made us pay tax to his hunger, — one day an ox, another a sheep. We count on you. " And I answered them, " It is

well! " — and here I am. The Native Department Officials promised me a supply of cartridges.

* * *

A lion in the forest of Alloufa, a single day's ride from where we stood! Was it the one I had seen the week before, gorged and good-tempered? The mighty cork-oaks of Alloufa had a reputation of old as affording shelter to many a fierce lion and lioness, and the *Chaouias* carefully avoided the wood by night. But for years now the roars of the maned Forest King had not disturbed the surrouding *douars*. Either the beasts had all fallen victims to the hunters' guns, or they had migrated elsewhere.

At last, I had got my chance, a unique chance! To go lion-hunting, not with some blundering and utterly inexperienced companion but with a real *Shikari*, a lion-killer whose fame eclipsed among the Tribes that of Jules Gérard himself. Ah, ha! my brown-eyed Kreïra, your hard heart is going to be touched after all!

Ahmed had left the room meantime. I went after

him, and soon came upon my man sitting on his heels at the door of the Native Department Office, patiently waiting to see the Kebir (Great man, Chief Official). I carried him off to the Café, primed him with a present of fifty cartridges, and told him my wishes.

"Are you a good shot?"

"I have killed half a dozen jackals, a hyaena, three boars....."

"Never shot lion?"

"No! never."

"Well, well!" he said without more ado; "everything must have a beginning."

It was agreed he should advise me when he was ready to start, and I set off without further delay to get leave of absence from my superior officers.

The Moorish baths lay on my way; and it was the women's hour. My little Kreïra was coming out at the moment. I should have known her among a thousand beneath her *moulaïa*, and her *haïk* that left nothing but her great dark eyes visible. Old Mabrouka, the duenna entrusted with the guardianship of her virtue and who never quitted her side by so much as one single step,

showed me her row of teeth, which the years had dyed as deep a yellow as that of her slippers, — her way of smiling. Yes! she always smiled when she saw me, well aware I was going to grease her skinny paw with that sovereign ointment that in a moment stops the sharpest ears and blinds the keenest eyes. She slipped the piece of money I gave her into her wide mouth, and pushed her young mistress towards me.

" I am going away, " I said to Kreïra. " I am going to kill you a lion. "

" Really and truly? Oh ! swear you mean it, swear on your head you do! "

" Upon my head ! " I answered, with a laugh.

" For me? You are going to kill him for me? "

" Yes ! for you. "

" You know what I promised you ! I keep my promises. "

She passed on, and I thought to myself, may be it was the last time I should ever hear her voice and the merry tinkle of the silver rings on her little brown ankles.

II

Next day at earliest dawn Ahmed-ben-Omar was knocking at my door.

" What! so soon ? "

" They have just brought me news from Alloufa. The lion has been levying fresh war contributions. He has taken a fancy to the sheep of the Ouled Sidi-Abid. To-night, please God, we will disturb his digestion. "

" The deuce ! Listen to me; I can't possibly start before I have handed over my duties to my substitute at parade-time. However I have a good horse; I shall catch you up before sunset. "

As a matter of fact I did overtake him towards seven o'clock near the Fort of Alloufa, no great way from the Forest, Seated in the midst of a group of Bedouins he was waiting for me, sharing with them meantime a meal of bread and dates. It was in vain I offered him a more substantial repast at the hostelry attached to the *Bordj*. He refused to take anything. I had to content myself with a mere snack, which I and my Spahi enjoyed

in company, washed down by a bottle of wine; and then off again at the trot.

* * *

An hour later, we made out behind a thicket of brushwood the smoke of a *douar*, and presently men and women coming to meet us, gesticulating wildly and talking all at once.

They told their tale with such a superabundance of detail it was difficult to gather what the disaster really was that had happened yesterday, and again only a short while before our arrival. It seems at dusk to-day the lion had appeared a second time and pounced on the flocks on their way home at the edge of the woods, within a thousand yards of the tents. A ram and a cow were found to be missing.

"Two at once!" cried Ahmed-ben-Omar. "Ah, ha! then there are a pair, lion and lioness". Then turning towards me, he added, "Well! all the better, eh? we shall each have a shot."

"A cow did you say, my men?"

"The best of the herd," screamed an old woman, all covered with dust. "A cow that could have fed the whole *douar*. I am a ruined woman; my poor little ones have nothing to eat now but tufts of wild *diss*."

And she went on moaning, and scratching her face, and wildly tearing her disordered mane, that doubtless the comb had never touched since the eve of her marriage; then suddenly with outstretched arms and doubled fists she hurled defiance at the unseen foe, spitting and scolding furiously in the direction in which he had disappeared.

I drew back out of her reach, for unable to get near Ahmed who was already surrounded by others, she was turning to me to rehearse her grievances. She called on me for sympathy; she took up once more the thread of her abuse, of her threats and curses; and called loudly on the Prophet's name.

In this way we made our way up to the *douar*, where more bawling, screeching women were ready to welcome us.

The men kept repeating:

"Peace! peace! daughters of Eblis! Go to,

bite the backs of your hands ; but stop deafening us, for the love of Allah ! "

But the women retorted :

" It needs but one ball to kill. Say, where are our young braves got to ? What ! is there no powder left in camp ? Nay ! but there is no pluck left in our men's hearts ! "

At this all the men brandished their muskets, shouting in dire wrath and pointing to Ahmet :

" We are going with him ! We are all going with him ! "

" No use, " returned Ahmet, " one is enough to do the job. Besides, it isn't I at all, but the Roumi, that's going to kill the lion ".

* * *

I stood listening, fist proudly posed on hip. Stray beams of the *Shikari's* glory were reflected on me. I took my share of the ovation and supplications of the crowd, and felt my heart swell within me.

But it was a very different thing when he thus drew their special attention to me.

Just at first they gazed at me distrustfully, but when he repeated his remark, adding : " Yes! lion or lioness, whichever he prefers, " they came crowding round me, the women exclaiming :

" Welcome, welcome! noble Roumi! "

" Allah fill full your house with plenty! "

" May he drive in a thorn into the eye of your enemies! "

And little Bedouin maidens, all smiles, kept crying :

" Dismount, Sir! dismount! You are our father. "

At this I laughed in my turn. They were about the same age as Kreïra, and it was hardly the revered name of *father* I should have wished for with them. However they called me so according to the custom the children of the Prophet have, who always give the title to such as they expect some good thing from.

Besides, though it was night, though the only illumination was that of the dying fires of the *douar*, all seemed bright, and sunlit; for had not the girls' great dark eyes rested admiringly on mine? Ah! the beautiful gentle eyes, I shall see you again when I come back at sunrise, bringing in

the *spolia opima* of the chase. In the intoxication of my expected triumph, I forgot all about the brown-skinned Kreïra.

We dismount, but we refuse utterly all offers of refreshment. We leave our horses, and my Spahi, Mohammed, like a pratical youth, more concerned about procuring a dish of *couscous* to regale himself withal than about sharing my growing renown, goes off quietly to shackle them to the common rope. We leave him seated under the shelter of a hospitable tent, as we make for the forest, followed by the mingled voices of men and women crying after us : "Allah guard you! Allah guard you! Come back safe, and soon!"

III

We draw near to the Forest, at first following a little path that wound along the edge and which seemed to be quite familiar to my companion, for he pushed forward unhesitatingly through the gloom. Enormous masses of rock, some bare,

some overgrown with rough bush, bordered the woods here and there.

Soon the darkness grows so intense I cannot make out my guide's white burnouse in front of me. He is obliged to stop now every moment to scrutinize the ground.

It is well known that, unlike all other wild animals, the lion does not travel across country in a wood, but prefers to follow the beaten paths. Many a time he has been actually seen slipping along a high-road with lordly bearing, head in air, and mane flying!

I remembered how one night at the *smala* of the Tarf a lion had paid us a visit. He had come into the unfenced garden of the *Bordj*, but instead of romping over the flower-borders and brutally trampling down the kitchen-garden, he had followed the paths, as we could verify next day by the marks he had left in the sand.

In silence, a load of vague anxiety weighing on my chest, I stood listening to the rustling in the thickets, the mysterious noises of the night, expecting every instant to see the lion barring our way or to hear the crackling of the boughs beneath his ponderous weight.

I only once broke silence to ask my guide:

"Much farther to go? Have they gone this way, think you?"

"No doubt about it, — one of them has;" returned the Arab, "and the male, I'm positive. But Satan empty my saddle, if I can be sure whether the lioness has.

* * *

We had been stumbling along for a whole hour without having covered more than a couple of thousand yards, when a terrific roar, followed by two or three low, hoarse notes, crashed out like a thunder clap.

"Do you hear him?" said Omar, stopping short and turning to me. "Our friend is not far off now. Could you make out what he said. He says .... do you know what he says?"

"Not I! — probably, 'Holloa! here's two fine fellows I'm going to make a meal of presently'."

"No! you haven't got it. Besides he don't want a meal; he's ballasted already. He said: *Ana wa el-ben el-mera*, 'I and the woman's son!' He

puts himself first, the proud beast! but we're here to show him the woman's son goes first, lion second."

I did not find Ahmed's little joke very amusing somehow. Still I felt bound to smile out of mere politeness, just as if he had been able to see my face. But if it had been daylight, he must have noticed my smile was a half-hearted affair.

"How far off may he be?"

"Five or six hundred yards at farthest. But in two minutes he might be under our noses."

Hurrah! we were getting near now. A few steps more and we came out into a fairly wide open space dotted here and there with hawthorns and crossed in the middle by a narrow ravine, down which, over a pebbly bed. clattered a thin thread of water.

"That's the place!"

The moon was rising, lifting her crescent behind the tall trees. The clearing was still in shade, but relieved against the heavy blackness of the covert, objects within it were fairly well visible.

"I killed two lions here," Ahmed remarked, "five years ago at this very spring, as they were

drinking. Look!" he went on, after scrutinizing the ground again, "look, his yesterday's *spoor* still showing on the wet soil. A fine well-grown lion! you can tell that by the size of his paws. But not a trace, — no more than in the path, — not a trace of the lioness. She must have carried off her sheep some other way. Anyhow, here's where they come to water. We must wait for them here, — unless you would rather go to meet them and give them a shot."

"I rely on you, do you direct operations."

"Well and good! then we will wait. Trust to me; and may Allah empty my cartridge-pouch, if to morrow they aren't saying of you, *Hadak Houa!* 'Yonder is the man!' You'll be like an Agha, and sleep on a lion's skin."

* * *

To aid my inexperience, he helped me choose the best station. Concealed in the deep shadows of a clump of tamarinds. I should be able to see the quarry come out into the open without being seen myself; then as he was drinking, I could take a deliberate aim.

I had perfect confidence in my weapon, a pivot-lock "Lefaucheux" small-bore, identical with my companion's — a fact which had enabled me to offer him a share of my cartridges; I was not so certain of my own steadiness. Nevertheless it was decided I should fire first; then, if I did not hit fair and square, Ahmed would loose in his turn, while I was reloading.

A lion seldom falls to the first ball, unless it pierces brain or heart.

"Aim between the eyes, if you can't at the shoulder, — at his belly, anywhere you can, according to the way he shows. Only break a leg, I undertake to finish him; but for your life, don't miss. "Who kills him, eats him, but the man that misses, — is eaten."

And, as if to give point to the saying, a roar, more terrific and nearer than before, cut short the hunter's counsels.

"Ah, ha! the dance begins. Keep your eyes open. I'm off to *my* station away there."

"Away there? where's that?"

"Corner of the clearing. If your balls go astray, I can take him in flank."

It was not without a certain feeling of dissatis-

faction I saw my comrade disappear in the darkness.

* * *

" Days given to the chase count not as days in a man's life ", another Arab saw has it, meaning they pass so merrily and so fast that their passage is unnoticed.

I presume the wisdom of the Mussulman does not include among such hours of blessedness those spent on the look-out, at night, for a lion. These appeared to me both long and dreary.

How long I remained thus, ambushed behind my thicket, — a poor barrier against a lion's claws, holding my breath, straining my ears, peering into every corner of the lonely clearing, with cocked rifle and finger darting to the trigger at the faintest rustle, I cannot say. At any rate after a while my attention began to flag, and my eyes to ache, while the stunted bushes assumed fantastic shapes in the light of the crescent moon, which had now risen clear of the topmost trees. Then, lo! and behold, they turned into the strange beasts of " Revelations ", and waltzed wildly round and round the clearing.

To escape the illusion, I indulged in other fancies equally illusory. I saw myself transported to a little Moorish house buried amid fig-trees, where all for me would be lit a tiny lamp behind the lattice of the *moucharabi* (projecting balcony-window), one night the old *Chaouch* should have tarried late at the *Caouadji's* smoking the dreamy *hashish*.

I seemed to breathe the very perfume of roses that the brown-locked Kreïra exhaled.

Suddenly, a sound startles me from my dreams, — the rapid tread of a heavy beast pushing through the underwood. Now it is making its way through the covert on the far side of the clearing, breaking the young shoots and trailing branches under its enormous weight; and *now* a black mass springs into sight in the open right opposite me.

At last!

He shows himself proudly, then halts in the long shadow projected by the group of trees; for the clearing is only partially flooded by the pale moonbeams. I can only make out his shape indistinctly, but I can hear his panting breath, which at this short distance appears to me more terrifying even than the previous roars.

There he is, — a few yards away, perhaps twenty, perhaps thirty! What matter? in two springs he could be on me! One second, and I should be mince-meat. Why does he stand like that? Now he seems to be turning his head in my direction. Perhaps he has scented an enemy? The thicket that conceals me is in full moonlight.

I must take the initiative. No use to turn tail now, or to stop and wait for his attack.

Things could not be better. He is perfectly still, and offers his shoulder, — the weak spot. An ideal shot, the game is in my hands. Kreira, you shall have your lion's skin!

Now for it! I take a quiet, steady aim, and... bang! bang! I loose my two barrels.

A leap in the air, a twist and a twirl, and the creature sinks heavily, thud! to the ground.... A fine shot!

* * *

Intoxicated with triumph, I quit my ambush, not even taking thought to reload my weapon.

"Hurrah! Ahmet-ben-Omar! hurrah! I say! I've done it. — Where are you?"

" Here I am," the hunter replied, emerging from a corner of the clearing.

" He's killed! he's killed dead!

" Don't say *he*, — say *she*; " was Ahmet's reply.

" Oh! it's the lioness, is it? it's a good shoot anyway for a beginner, eh? Dont't you think so?"

The man was laughing, — no doubt with joy; *or* perhaps it was the sneering laugh of jealousy.

" They're all alike, these sportsmen, " I thought to myself. " You'd suppose the lions belonged to them, and that by killing one you were trespassing on their rights. "

Then I thought I had better load again, as the male might not be far off, — and said so.

" Oh! " said Ahmed, with the same disagreeable laugh, " the male's all right. He's down yonder at the village. "

I failed to understand. I stepped across the brook; my companion had done so already, and was accordingly nearer than I to the spot where the beast lay.

" Come on, " he said; " come close. She won't toss you. "

" Eh? what d'you mean? "

" Judge for yourself. It's undoubtedly the finest cow of all the herds of the *Sidi-Abid*. Ah! yes! look, it's the old witch-wife's cow; do you remember? — Perhaps it will be wise not to go back by the village; she might very well leave the mark of her nails on your face, ... unless you soothe her feelings with a silver plaster. "

I bent over the carcase. I could not at first believe my eyes; it took some moments before I realized the ghastly truth. Meantime Ahmet, striking his butt on the dead animal, added with a profound seriousness :

" Yes, indeed! the old woman would be quite justified. It is a *very* handsome cow. Behold, do what we will, our days are numbered. She was fain to escape the lion's jaws: and lo! she is fallen to a Roumi's bullet. Enough for to-night; the lion will not come now. Look at her like that till morning, — you can't bring the poor beast to life again. Let us be going. But listen, and remember when next you go lion-hunting, there are no two things so much alike, in the confounded dark, as a cow and a lion.

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* * *

I did not dare go back by the tents of the *Sidi-Abid*; and I never saw the pretty, gazelle-eyed *toflas* again. They laughed heartily, I make no doubt, at my misadventure, — but not so consumedly as did the hard-hearted Kreïra, who steadfastly refused for a whole long month and more to kindle her lamp in the *moucharabi*, when the venerable *Chaouch*, her husband, lay drunk with anisette in the Moorish café amid the fumes of the *hashish*.

XIX

A SHROVE-TIDE INTERLUDE

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I clean forget in whose honour the dinner was given, whether in that of the Abbé Bidoux, *Curé* of Souk-Arras, or of Chipotot, Colonization Ins-

pector, or whether it wasn't rather to celebrate the arrival of little Baron Lampinet, a new-comer from the great mill of St.-Cyr, who only the very day before had dropped from the sky into the *Bordj*. Be this as it may, anyhow Shrove Tuesday was the day selected, and the meal had been worthy of the 4th Squadron of the 3rd Spahis. Further, one of this distinguished band who had come to us from the " Guards " having declared the banquet really reminded him of the Imperial *mess*, but that he missed the music, Capt. Fleury, our caterer in chief, promised us an orchestral performance right there in the Desert.

He sent for the *Chaouch* Ali-ben-Ali, gave him sundry orders in a whisper, and the eating and drinking went on as before... more particularly the drinking. It was a thirsty evening; through the open windows, as night fell, blew in a hot languorous air that seemed to put Cayenne pepper in handfuls down your throat!

Accordingly the company, pretty well heated already by the time the punch-bowl was set fire to, called loudly for the promised music to calm down the excitement of their nerves, and the Abbé Bidoux hummed over :

Strike the loud harp; O ! Lord,
Thy praise foretell;
Proclaim Thee God, th' Adored
Of Israël !

*
* *

The door opened; and a great silence fell on us. The Curé of Souk-Arras threw himself back in his chair with half-closed eyes, and put his hands on his stomach, preparing to imitate King Saul and digest his dinner to the sound of the " loud harp ". Inspector Chipotot shut up his eye-glasses, the new Sub-Lieutenant fidgeted, while big Badenco, our Senior Lieutenant, kept digging him vigorously in the ribs and repeating over and over again : " Now we're going to see some fun, my *griffin* ! "

But for two whole minutes the door stood open, — and nothing came in; nothing except a strange, penetrating scent in which musk essence was combined with a triply distilled essence of " humanity ", and along with it sounds of whispering, giggling, elbowing, and the tinkle of a *tarbouka* (tambourine). " Now ! now ! Come along in then ! " Fleury called out.

The noises ceased. A sort of rhythmical march made itself heard, and one behind the other, appeared, a broad smile on their lips, showing their white teeth and striking the *tarbouka* in time all together, ten young negresses, wrapped from head to foot in those great pieces of blue checked calico known as *moulaïas*.

Spite of the fixed smile on their lips, they seemed to be as timid and shy as school-girls from the *Sacré-Cœur* at a first tête-à-tête with their cousin in the Life-Guards; but the officers encouraging them by words and signs, they ranged themselves along the wall, and sat down on their heels on the floor, their eyes fixed on the blazing punch-bowl.

* * *

Can I ever forget that row of savage faces, flat noses, thick greedy-looking lips, dazzling teeth, — in front, and the enormous projections behind! They had left their sandals of yellow leather at the door, and you could see the white soles of their feet. The feet looked nervous and strong, the legs thin and muscular like a thorough-bred

mare's, gallant at work and gallant at play. The blue flamesof the flaring spirit and the yellow dots of the candles were mere darkness to the flash of the twenty eyes, lighted up by curiosity and desire, when they saw ladlefuls of liquid fire being poured into the glasses.

At first they put on looks of horror, when the brimming goblets were passed to them. But the Abbé Bidoux swore the liquor was an innocent kind of sherbet for which the fair Aïcha, fourth wife of the Prophet, professed a special preference; hearing this, they suffered themselves to be overpersuaded, and after a series of wry faces intended to hide any too manifest satisfaction on their part, they drained off the contents at one gulp. This done, they would pass their tongues over their lips, exactly as cats do after lapping up a saucer of cream, while the Christian *Marabout* laughed till he cried at the trick he had played Mahomet.

Then, with eyes ablaze and faces wreathed in smiles, all together they struck up a strange, exotic tune, accompanying themselves on the *tarboukas*. The rhythm was a trifle monotonous, but imbued with a certain soft, languorous melody of its own.

* * *

After a second round of the punch, accepted this time without the smallest hesitation, two of the girls rose, and advancing to the Commandant of the *Bordj*, after first of all kissing his hands and his right shoulder as a preliminary, offered to perform an Arab dance. The offer was accepted with acclamation, even the Abbé chiming in, who declared he had long been wishful to observe an exhibition of what he called "this barbaric infatuation".

In an instant both the girls had stripped off their *moulaïas*, and appeared clad in the simple *komidja* (shift), a garment consisting of two pieces of cotton fastened at the shoulders by means of a couple of copper clasps, and confined at the waist by a woollen cord. It is of necessity open at the sides, nor does it descend below the knee, thus not leaving the most inquisitive eyes much more to desire.

Then face to face, rolling their passionate eyes and smiling alluringly, they swung their bodies on the plump, rounded hips to and fro and up and

down, playing in a highly realistic pantomime the old, old story of the love of the sexes.

The musicians' fingers rattling feverishly on the *tarboukas* governed the dancers' movements, now slow, now quick, while the copper rings on arms and ankles clashed together with a shrill tinkling sound.

The Officers laughed; our young friend the Sub-Lieutenant kept bobbing up and down on his chair, in unconscious mimicry of the dancers; the Colonization Inspector, with straining neck and gaping mouth, was holding his glasses on with both hands, for fear they should slip from his nose, while the Curé with crimson cheeks, his head in his plate and his hands joined as if he were mumbling a service of thanksgiving to heaven, only ventured an occasional peep out of the corners of his eyes.

At last, with a final whirl they dropped panting and half-swooning beside their comrades, who stopping the accompaniment, held out their glasses, which we sprang forward to replenish.

Soon the intoxication became general, and the amorous breath of the *Simoom* lashed them to frenzy. An overpowering " goaty " smell filled the

spacious room, drowning the scent of musk. This mingled with the wind from the Desert laden with all the perfumes of the night, and filled the lungs, like, the sea-breeze of Baiae that was so fatal to the Roman fair ones, that taught young maidens to love and made the rose-gardens of Paestum blossom twice a year.

To moderate the hot wind from out of doors, Fleury had *frechias* stretched across the windows. But the air inside the hall was like an extract of cantharides; and the negresses catching fire like torches of resinous pine-wood, sprang up with flaming eyes and red quivering lips, and kicking up their heels behind with one accord, began, — the whole ten together, a dance mimicking she-goats signalling the male!

* * *

Below, in the courtyard of the *Bordj*, a group of negroes stood waiting, a prey to poignant anxiety. They were the husbands and brothers, watching with eyes raised to the windows of the *Kebir*, gloomy and uneasy, the fantastic shadows

of their wives and sisters passing over the heavy curtains. Suddenly the lights went out; nothing to be seen on the *fréchias* stretched across the windows but dancing gleams of red and blue, like flames shooting from a furnace.

The fact was that up in the mess-room they were lighting up a second bowl of punch, and that the young scamp Sub-Lieutenant Lampinet, had gone without a word and slyly blown out the candles.

* * *

Their last garment had slipped from the dancing-girls' shoulders on the bright-coloured carpet, and lighted up by the fantastic flame, their black skins threw out startling gleams of colour. They might have been a group of Bacchantes carved in bronze in every attitude of surrender giving themselves to the furious embraces of the Satyrs.

It was indeed a scene of wild orgy, and the Curé made many unavailing efforts to escape. But his legs refused their office, and he fell back heav-

ily on his chair screwing up his eyes and crying, "Oh! Oh! Oh! But it was impossible to say whether these sounds were groans of horror or exclamations of delight.

The Inspector too, a peaceable man ofregular habits, being on the *Civil* side and so left out in the cold like the Curé, got up in his turn, that he might not witness the Saturnalia. Taking the Abbé under the arm-pits, he drew him staggering away, and pushed him gently outside the room. Feeling along the walls and groping for the steps, they descended the stairs.

At the foot sat a dozen Spahis, philosophically drinking coffee and guarding the outer door against any indiscreet intruder, while a short way off the negroes kept their eyes obstinately fixed on the windows, from which not a thread of light now came.

Their anxiety was yet further increased by the fact that the drumming of the *tarboukas* had stopped altogether.

On seeing the Curé and his companion, they rushed forward, demanding their wives.

"We lent them for the feast," they vociferated, "simply to play the *tam-tam*."

" That in no way concerns us; " returned the Inspector coldly.

" It was simply for the *tam-tam* ! " the men kept repeating, more and more alarmed.

" Do give us a little peace and quietness! " retorted the Inspector.

But the man of God was more complaisant, and added with a hiccough :

" I beg you to observe that we are leaving..... We wish to have no complicity, no complicity whatever, in the goings on upstairs ! "

" The *tam-tam* ! " the negroes went on repeating; " you can't hear the *tam-tam* any more ! "

As soon as they were outside the *Bordj*, the Curé covered his face, muttering :

" Regular Babylonish orgies ! "

" Say at once Saturnalia of the Lower Empire ! " chimed in the Inspector.

" Abominations of the Lupercal, Mons. Chipotot, I say ! "

" Disgusting behaviour, I call it ! » echoed the other.

" Yes, Sir ! that is the word; " ejaculated the Curé, whose intoxication the open air was increasing, — " to treat invited guests so, it *was* disgust-

ing behaviour! As there were twelve of us, surely they ought to have ordered twelve negresses. Two more or less, — why! the expense would have been a mere trifle! "

NOTES

NOTE TO PAGE 274

BOU-ZEB : The student of Arabic will not require the English rendering of this delightful dissyllable which Propriety will permit us only partly to unveil in the twilight obscurity of the Latin tongue : " Pene ingenti praeditus ". The reader may consult *Untrodden Fields of Anthropology* (Vol. I, p. 299), for scientific details concerning the organ of generation in the Arab race, as well for a shocking case, authenticated by two qualified medical men, of the death of a young Bedawin bride owing to the *uncommon* dimensions of the marital penis and the excessive lustful brutality shown by her husband.

The writer recollects his old friend, Dr. Paul Broca, professor of Anthropology, lecturing at the *École d'Anthropologie de Paris*, upon the Dimensions of the Genital Male Organ amongst different Races, stating that European prostitutes in the West

Indies had been expressly recommended not to have commerce with the Negroes, owing to the internal injuries likely to result from the abnormal size of the native organ. Much curious information on this head may be found in the *Ethnology of the Sixth Sense*, wherein the subject is treated soberly and with considerable amplitude. Why do English medical writers always studiously fight shy of these questions? See also Sinibaldus' *Geneanthropeia* "*Of such Things as do Lengthen the Verge*" (from the Latin) translated into English and quoted *in extenso* in *the Old Man Young Again*, pages 160 sqq. (Paris, 1898).

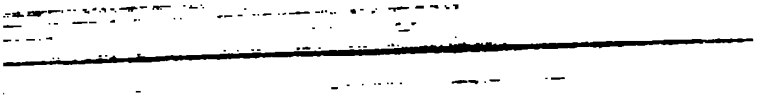
NOTE TO PAGE 281

Few customs are more curious than those pertaining to the demonstration of the bride's innocence. Dr. Charles Letourneau writes : " The woman's Virginity is neither thought about, nor cared for, except in the Mussulman countries where the Moorish race has more or less penetrated. At Kaarta the women of the country come together the morning after the marriage and *carefully examine the nuptial bed*, and, unless the woman's innocence be shown, the marriage may be considered as void. But with the Sakkalaves of Madagascar it is quite otherwise. There the young girls *unflower themselves* before marriage unless their parents have already taken the same necessary precaution ".

Reference has already been made *in Curious Bypaths of History* (Paris, 1898, pages 284 to 300), to the fabrication of fictitious virginities in European countries and of the Tricks often played

off upon the unsuspecting husband by ladies who have either made a *faux pas*, been forcibly seduced and hushed the matter up, or have lost their hymen through an accident, a not infrequent occurrence if we are to credit medical men.

In the great cities of Europe it sometimes happens that a young girl's maidenhead is deliberately sold by vicious parents or guardians, to debauched ravishers, as witness the revelations of *Pall Mall Gazette* fame, and which undoubtedly represent only a hundreth part of what really goes on. A Viennese prostitute, a young woman of twenty-one and a girl of fine build and very well-informed conversation to boot, frankly told the writer that her virtue had been bargained away to an old, semi-impotent *richard* for £ 40, but that he was physically incapable of perfect consummation : " the work *was finished* ', she added, with refreshing *naiveté*, 'by a common fellow *for love* "

We have it from a sightseer that in certain Italian villages the *bed-sheet of the first-night* is hung out of the window for the information of the entire village, thus " going it one better " even, than the natives of Kaarta above-named. In *Genital Laws, their Observation and Violation* this subject is handled with great skill and a surprising

abundance of little known details, and to this work we would refer the Anthropological student, desirous of further information on this head.